LOVE TRAGEDY OF A FAMOUS ACTRESS: "WHAT MY PUBLIC DIDN'T KNOW"

True Confessions

NSC

OCTOBER

TRUE CONFESSIONS 10¢

BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

I LOVED [illegible] WANTON

This Portrait Posed by

MISS TYPICAL AMERICA

FOR WINNERS SEE PAGE 28

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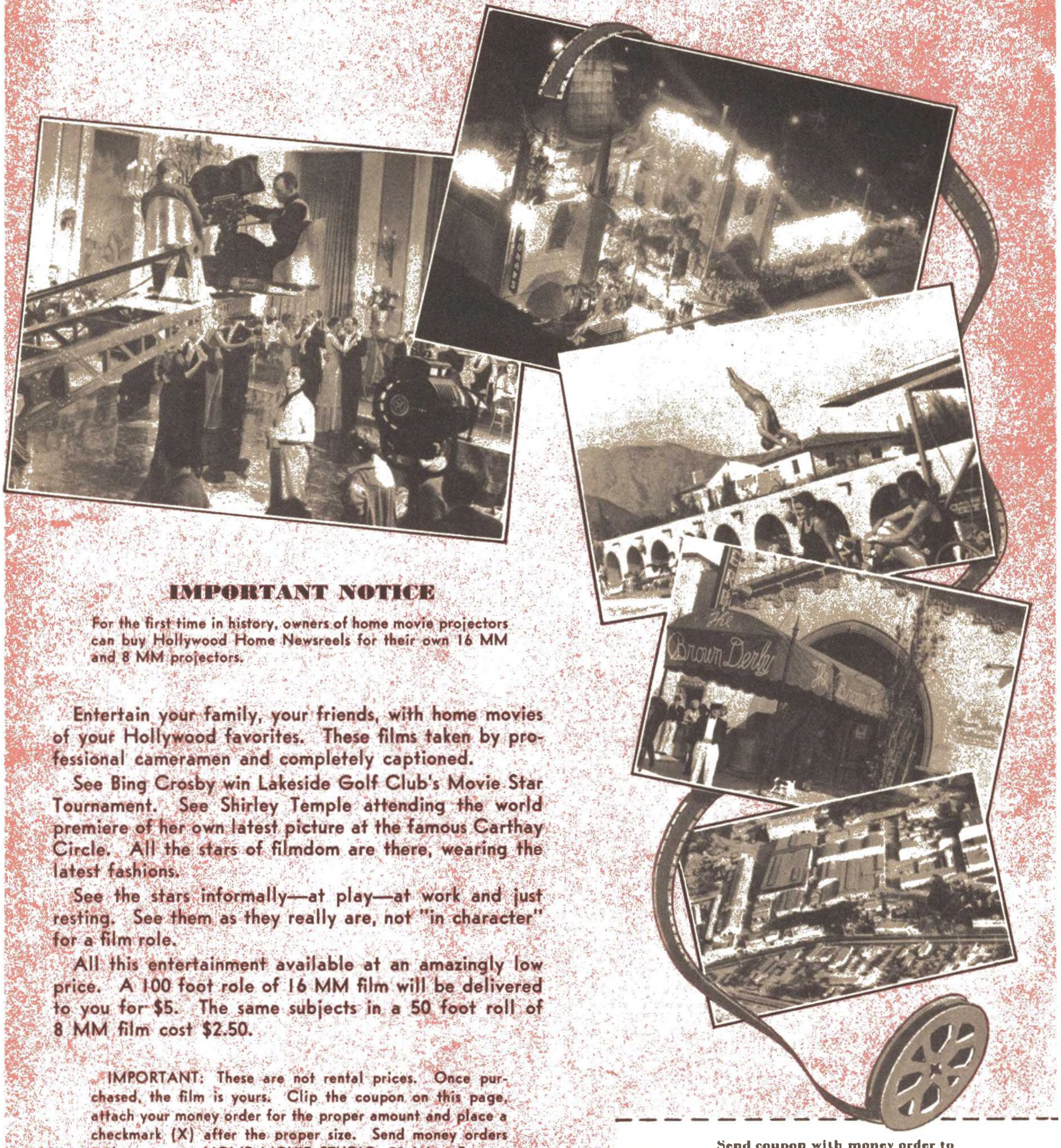

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Send coupon with money order to

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22 West Putnam Avenue
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Send money orders to Greenwich office. Your film will be sent postpaid from our Hollywood studio.

Fortune's Favorite

[UNTIL SHE SMILES]

She evades close-ups... Dingy teeth and tender gums destroy her charm . . . She ignored the warning of "PINK TOOTH BRUSH"

"SURELY," you say, "surely the world's at this girl's feet!" Blessed with beauty and dowered with grace—life seems to have given her its best.

But there is a thief that robs her loveliness, that steals away her charm. That thief is *her dull, dingy* and *unattractive smile.* Tragic? Yes, but that's the price she pays for neglect—*a penalty she could have avoided.*

NEVER NEGLECT "PINK TOOTH BRUSH"

Play safe—don't risk an attractive smile—don't pay the penalties of tender gums and dull and dingy teeth! When you see that telltale warning tinge of "pink" on your tooth brush—*see your dentist immediately*—let him advise you.

While there may be nothing seriously wrong, don't take chances—let your dentist decide. Often, however, he will explain your condition as a "simple case of sensitive gums—gums that are the victims of our modern menus—gums robbed of work by today's soft and creamy foods." And his advice will probably be "more work and resistance for lazy gums" and, often, "the helpful stimulation of Ipana Tooth Paste and massage."

For Ipana, with massage, is especially designed to help the gums as well as keep teeth clean and sparkling. Massage a little extra Ipana into your gums every time you brush your teeth. Circulation quickens in the gums. Gums become firmer—your teeth brighter, more lustrous.

Millions of people already have adopted the Ipana Tooth Paste and massage dental health routine. It's one simple, easy way of helping to prevent dental disorders—and with your gums more vigorous and healthy, your teeth sparkling and bright—you never need be ashamed of your smile!

• • •

LISTEN TO "Town Hall Tonight"—every Wednesday night over N. B. C. Red Network, 9 o'clock, E.D.S.T.

IPANA plus massage is your dentist's able assistant in the home care of teeth and gums

GOOD FOR TENDER GUMS
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TOOTH PASTE
BRISTOL-MYERS
NEW YORK
RUBBERSET'S
DOUBLE DUTY

True Confessions

Vol. 31 No. 183

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Posed by Kent Taylor and Nan Grey

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Names of real persons or actual business firms are never used in the stories in TRUE CONFESSIONS. If the names of actual persons appear in these stories, it is a matter of coincidence.

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MEMBER AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS

"FRANKLY, I DON'T SEE WHY
ANY WOMAN WOULD RISK
A SUBSTITUTE FOR KOTEX*"
Kotex
KOTEX
*Trade Marks Reg.
U. S. Patent Office

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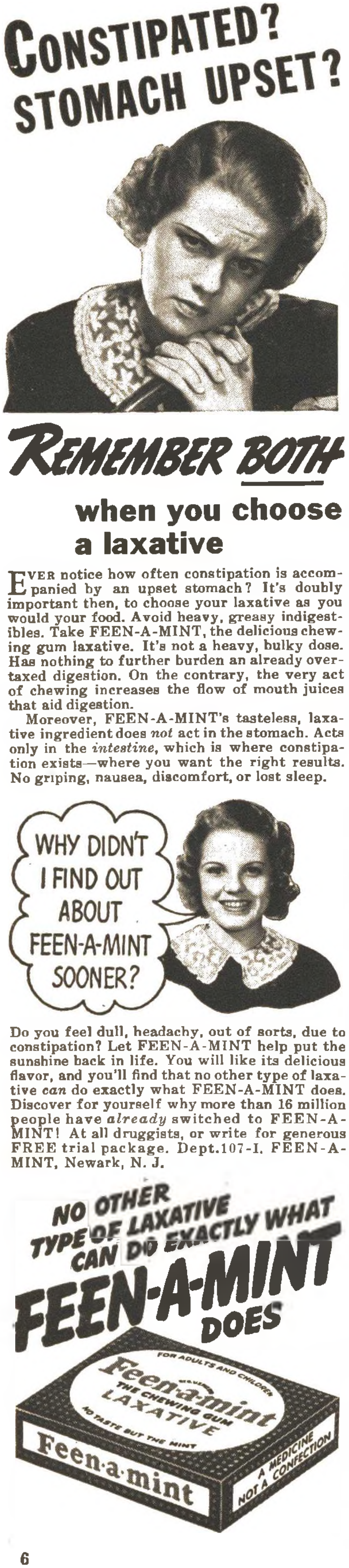
Wherever you go . . . whatever you do . . . *Kotex Sanitary Napkins stay Wondersoft . . . Can't Chafe . . . Can't Fail . . . Can't Show

Only Kotex has 3 types

Because one-size napkin will not do for every woman—no more than one-size hat, dress or pair of shoes. Besides women's personal needs are different on different days. Only by trying "All 3"—Regular, Junior and Super Kotex—can you meet each day's exact needs!

KOTEX* SANITARY BELTS are designed to wear with Kotex Sanitary Napkins. These narrow-type belts adjust to fit the figure. Dainty, secure clasps prevent slipping. Three types: "De Luxe", "Wonderform" and "Featherweight" . . . priced for any purse.


CONSTIPATED? STOMACH UPSET?

REMEMBER BOTH when you choose a laxative

EVER notice how often constipation is accompanied by an upset stomach? It's doubly important then, to choose your laxative as you would your food. Avoid heavy, greasy indigestibles. Take FEEN-A-MINT, the delicious chewing gum laxative. It's not a heavy, bulky dose. Has nothing to further burden an already overtaxed digestion. On the contrary, the very act of chewing increases the flow of mouth juices that aid digestion.

Moreover, FEEN-A-MINT's tasteless, laxative ingredient does *not* act in the stomach. Acts only in the *intestine*, which is where constipation exists—where you want the right results. No griping, nausea, discomfort, or lost sleep.

Do you feel dull, headachy, out of sorts, due to constipation? Let FEEN-A-MINT help put the sunshine back in life. You will like its delicious flavor, and you'll find that no other type of laxative *can* do exactly what FEEN-A-MINT does. Discover for yourself why more than 16 million people have *already* switched to FEEN-A-MINT! At all druggists, or write for generous FREE trial package. Dept.107-I, FEEN-A-MINT, Newark, N. J.

NO OTHER TYPE OF LAXATIVE CAN DO EXACTLY WHAT FEEN-A-MINT DOES

PORT OF

BY SALLY O'DAY

Here's a sincere invitation. I AM a young girl of twenty-two and an artist who would like pen pals of all ages. Here's a sincere invitation to all lovers of music, art, nature, books and all that is beautiful in life. I'll gladly exchange photos if you wish, so please, all hurry and fill my mail box. *Therese, N. Y.*

"Oh, he flies through the air..." I AM a young aviator stationed at Allbrook in the Army Air Corps, in Panama. I have been a pilot for five years and have had many thrilling experiences. I am five feet ten inches, have black hair and am considered good looking. I promise to answer all letters, so come on and write. *C. P. Panama*

Lonely and alone. I AM a widow in my late thirties, lonely and alone, therefore, I would like to have plenty of pals between the ages of forty-seven and fifty. I have a pleasing personality, quiet, cultured and like home life. I also like adventure and traveling. *Lela, La.*

The traveller from Pa. I AM a strange man in a strange land and am very lonely. I don't know a single person in this place as I only came here recently. I am thirty-eight years of age, have brown hair and blue eyes, five feet eight inches tall, and weigh about one hundred and forty-five pounds. I have travelled the good old U. S. A. pretty thoroughly and have mingled with the people there so as to know their joys and sorrows. Won't you write to me? *O. M., Pa.*

Introducing, Gloria, of Wisconsin. A PEPPY, blue-eyed blonde with honest-to-goodness naturally wavy hair, and cute dimples, age seventeen. Sounds attractive doesn't it? She'll exchange photos if you wish. Want to know what her pet hobbies are? Well, here goes: dancing, swimming, playing the piano, going to the movies, reading and collecting stamps. Gloria made a bet that she could receive at least thirty replies to this letter within a month, so come on and help her win this bet! *Gloria, Wisc.*

LONELY HEARTS

Would like South African Pen Pals. I WOULD like to hear from pen pals who are located in South Africa as I am very much interested in their ways and customs. I am a young man thirty-five years of age, single, and at present am practicing law in Chicago. I am a reserve army officer and as a result have met some interesting foreign people and so desire to keep up my correspondence with them.

Cliff, Ill.

Easy to get along with. I AM a widow thirty-nine and considered good-looking. I like to go to the movies, play cards, go motoring and go on picnics. I am also very fond of travelling. Won't someone please write to me?

Laura, Pa.

Don't miss this. I AM a young man of nineteen, handsome, energetic and hardworking. Intending to visit America to further

[*Please turn to page* 101]

RULES FOR JOINING THE PORT OF LONELY HEARTS

1. Letters to pals must contain a three-cent stamp for postage and ten cents to cover clerical costs. There is no charge for publishing a letter.
2. Addresses of pals cannot be given out. The first letter must go through the Port. After that, correspondence between pals is direct.
3. Make your letter as interesting as possible so that the pen pal to whom you write will be anxious to correspond with you. Although it is seldom that a pen pal does not answer the letters he or she receives, I cannot guarantee you a reply. I can only assume the responsibility of passing your letter on.
4. Please do not ask me to enter into personal correspondence with you as that is impossible.
5. Address your letter to the PORT OF LONELY HEARTS, TRUE CONFESSIONS, Fawcett Bldg., Greenwich, Conn.

Sincerely yours,
SALLY O'DAY.

"and life is so much gayer now!"

Your *lovelier* way to avoid offending did the trick! I'm sure all the girls would be more alluring, if they bathed with this exquisite perfumed Cashmere Bouquet Soap!
Sincerely,
Mary Moore

SO MUCH NICER, MODERN GIRLS FIND, to guard daintiness this *lovelier* way. For Cashmere Bouquet Soap, with its deep-cleansing lather, removes every trace of unpleasant body odor . . . And besides, with its exquisite flower-like perfume, it keeps your skin alluringly fragrant! You're always completely safe from any fear of offending!

LONG AFTER YOUR BATH, ITS FRAGRANCE LINGERS . . . surrounds you glamorously! It's no wonder that men prefer girls who bathe with Cashmere Bouquet Soap. But don't think that ordinary scented soaps will give you this same protection. Only Cashmere Bouquet's rare perfume has this special *lingering* quality. So, insist on Cashmere Bouquet!

NOW ONLY 10¢

MARVELOUS FOR COMPLEXIONS, TOO!
This pure, creamy-white soap has such a gentle, caressing lather. Yet it removes every trace of dirt and cosmetics—keeps your skin alluringly smooth, radiantly clear!

TO KEEP FRAGRANTLY DAINTY—BATHE WITH PERFUMED
CASHMERE BOUQUET SOAP

Ruby Keeler

TESTS 2 TALCUMS

RUBY KEELER, *popular dancing screen star*

Names "Y" Her Favorite

Ruby Keeler tries both powders in plain white boxes. She likes both, but prefers "Y"—the new MAVIS, *mildly scented.* Other lovely stars choose "X"— the original MAVIS, *fully scented.*

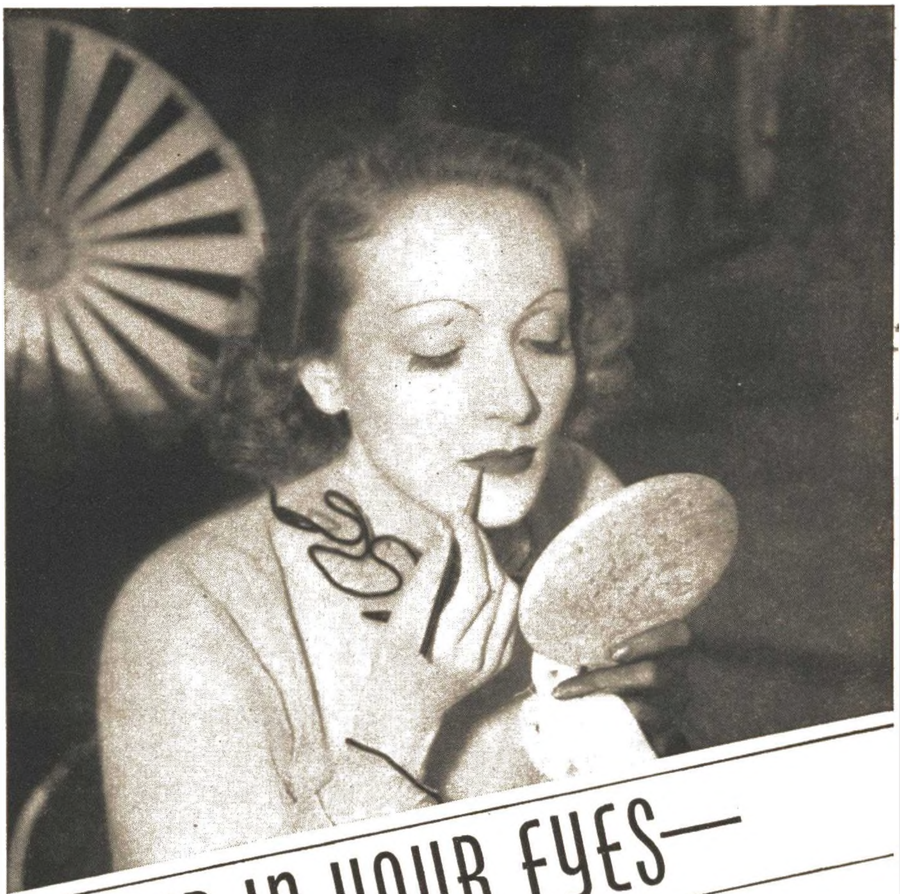
MAVIS flatters the skin like a glamorous face powder. Spreads evenly—clings for hours—leaves a bewitching fragrance that *lasts!* MAVIS safeguards summer daintiness . . . makes clothes slip on more smoothly and easily.

NEW! MILDLY SCENTED MAVIS
Created for the woman who prefers a subtly perfumed talcum. 33-hole needle-spray top showers body with light film of powder ever so much more effectively than old-fashioned powder puffs.

PURITY TEST: In a test with ten well known face powders, MAVIS talcum was found to be finer in texture and smoother on the skin, than seven out of ten face powders. Get your MAVIS today at your favorite store.

MAVIS
FOR BODY
PROTECTION

#1 Original MAVIS
MAVIS TALCUM
MAVIS TALCUM Mildly Scented
#2 New MAVIS Mildly Scented



DEEP IN YOUR EYES—

By
Winifred
Rogers

THE VANITY CASE

WHEN the season of football dances begins, I always receive a great many letters from readers asking how to make-up the eyes, so I have decided to make this article a timely collection of the most typical questions, with the right answers.

Q. My eyebrows are very sparse and blonde. I use eyebrow pencil, but can't seem to achieve anything but artificial-looking, thin, black lines. Have you any helpful suggestions?

A. Since your brows are light in color, you will probably find that a brown eyebrow pencil will give a more natural effect than a black one. As for the application, here is a method that results in a very natural and flattering effect: Apply the pencil, neither too lightly nor too heavily; in short, slanting strokes, following the natural arch of the brows. Make the brows almost a quarter of an inch thick at their widest point, tapered at the ends. Now apply face powder generously over these penciled brows and let it remain for a moment or two. Then, with a clean, dry eyebrow

Posed by Marlene Dietrich and Thelma Leeds

brush, carefully brush the excess powder out of the brows. Just enough of the powder clings to the pencil to take away the harsh, definite look, to soften the edges.

Q. Can you tell me why my mascara always goes on lumpily or smudges? I have used both cake and cream mascara but can't seem to master the trick of applying them.

A. In using a cake mascara, you must be careful to get just enough water on the brush, and not to rub the brush over the cake so hard that the mixture of mascara and water becomes too thick. Then apply the mascara quickly, brushing it on sideways to cover each lash thoroughly. Now, with a clean, dry brush, separate the lashes and remove excess darkener by brushing them lengthwise. Some experts suggest the use of a tiny eyelash comb for this last step in the routine, so you might experiment with both the comb and the brush until you find which method is easier for you. Cream mascara should be applied in the same way, even though with most of them it is not necessary to moisten the brush. Before applying mascara, be sure that your lashes are clean, free from powder or oil, so that the darkener will adhere longer, without flaking off or smudging. The application of an eyelash cream or oil at bedtime will keep your lashes healthy and silky in texture, so that mascara will be most effective.

LOVELY FASHION MODEL REVEALS FIGURE-SECRET

My girdles always hold in my figure because I wash them often with Ivory Flakes. It prevents "girdle-bulge"

118 lbs. of allure! Divinely slim yet divinely rounded. Nature didn't do it all! Like all smart models, this girl finds that clothes simply will not fit unless she wears a girdle. "My girdles fit perfectly for months!" says Alicia Quigley, famous model, "because I restore the shape by washing my girdle often with pure Ivory Flakes."

"GIRDLE-BULGE" CURED OVERNIGHT

This "sloppy girdle" with unsightly bulges is the result of too few washings.

The same girdle . . . its shape restored overnight when washed with Ivory Flakes.

"Use flakes of pure soap" stores tell me

"When I ask salesgirls in fine stores what they mean by pure soap, they always say 'Ivory Flakes'," explains Miss Quigley. "They say Ivory Flakes are the only soap flakes made of pure Ivory Soap that's safe even for a baby's skin. Ivory revives elastic and other fine materials."

Alicia gives you washing hints: "Wash girdle in lukewarm Ivory Flakes suds, using soft brush. After rinsing, roll in towel to remove water. Shake and hang up *at once!* Girdle will be dry by morning—as snug-fitting as if new!"

WHAT A FIGURE!

IVORY FLAKES
99 44/100% pure

IVORY FLAKES

TRADEMARK REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. • MADE BY PROCTER & GAMBLE

Married Women
WEAR
FREE
DRESSES
and EARN up to
$16 IN A WEEK
during spare hours

Here's a wonderful offer for ambitious married women. Be the direct factory representative for glorious Fashion Frocks. Wear the lovely dresses offered to you free and show to friends. Take their orders and earn up to $16 in a week doing this easy, fascinating and dignified work.

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Name................................ Age......

Address ....

City.......................... State..........

THE VANITY CASE

LOVELY Ann Dvorak pauses before going on the set of *She's No Lady*, the B. P. Schulberg production, to add finishing touches with a well-known beauty preparation.

Q. My eyes are probably my worst feature — small, nondescript in color and close-set. My lashes are thick enough, but very straight. Could eye make-up improve the appearance of my eyes, or should I leave them alone and concentrate on other features?

A. Eye make-up lavishly or incorrectly applied would certainly call attention to your particular feature-fault, but used with restraint and skill, it will correct the difficulty. Apply eye shadow on the outer half of the eyelids to make the eyes seem farther apart. Never let it extend in toward the nose for that will only seem to draw the eyes closer together. Your mascara should also be concentrated most heavily at the outer corners of the eyes, to give an illusion of width between the eyes. For the same reason, pluck your eyebrows, if necessary, so that there is at least an inch of space between them. You can make your eyes seem wider and larger by curling your upper lashes with a mechanical curling gadget, after applying mascara.

Q. I have no trouble applying mascara, but have never been able to get the right effect with eye shadow. My eyes are blue, rather deep-set.

A. When eye shadow is applied heavily and extended almost up to the eyebrows in the usual way, it has the effect of making deep-set eyes seem even more so. For that reason, your eye shadow should be applied very sparingly, in a narrow line at the base of the upper lashes. Since it is rather difficult to apply a thin line of shadow with the fingertips, I suggest that you use shadow in pencil form or apply paste shadow with the aid of a camel's hair brush that looks almost exactly like a small paint brush. After applying the line of shadow, blur its upper edge to indistinctness. If your eyes are wide-set, extend the line well in toward the nose; otherwise, let it extend slightly beyond the outer corners of the eyes, in a downward slant.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW—
. . . how to correct oily or dry hair—
. . . how to choose your make-up—
. . . how to apply your make-up—
. . . how perspiration can be controlled—
write to Winifred Rogers, c/o TRUE CONFESSIONS, 1501 Broadway, New York, N. Y. Be sure to enclose a STAMPED, (U. S. stamps only) self-addressed envelope for her reply. No matter what your beauty problem is, she will be glad to help you! This service is FREE!

Q. I have brown hair, rather fair skin, blue eyes and brown lashes and brows. I like to wear black, browns, greens and blues and, preferably, white for evening. Can you tell me what shades of eye cosmetics would be most suitable?

A. In your case, you will find that black, brown, blue and green mascara can be used with great effect, depending on the color of your frock. Black mascara and blue shadow will be most effective with black frocks or with white, while brown mascara and green or mahogany shadow will blend nicely with light and dark browns. When wearing blues, try a dark blue mascara and light blue shadow, with an overtone of silver. If the frock is a dark blue, you may find that purple eye shadow applied lightly will be flattering. When you don greens, the best color combination in eye cosmetics is green mascara and a pale green or light brown eye shadow.

Q. I have very heavy, curly eyebrows that are difficult to manage. When I pluck and thin them too much, they give my face an unnatural look; yet, when I stop plucking them, they become much too bushy. Is there any way of training them so that they will look well-groomed, yet natural?

A. Eyebrows of this type need constant care, but they can be much improved by following this routine: Pluck only those hairs that straggle underneath the brows or that extend too far over the bridge of the nose. To keep the curliness under control, trim the ends of the longest, curliest hairs with a small manicure scissors, being careful not to cut off too much. For the rest, brush and brush and brush the brows, training them to lie flat and keep within bounds. For this purpose, I recommend a brush that is larger than the ones that come with mascara, because the coarse, unruly hairs need more severe discipline. First, brush the hairs in toward the nose, then in the opposite direction, with an upward and outward motion of the brush. Do this for two or three minutes whenever you make-up, always before going to bed, and any time during the day when you have an opportunity. A bit of light wave set, diluted with water, and brushed on the brows, will help to keep each hair in place, too.

AND now for some cosmetic news flashes! One of the creamiest of cream mascaras has acquired a new and convenient container, for keeping the lipstick-styled tube and brush neatly together. This mascara, which has been on the market for some time, is made by a Paris firm, and it comes in four glamorous shades—black, brown, dark blue and green. To use it, you moisten the small brush, press the tube and push the brush back and forth over the opening. This creamy mascara is ideal for darkening eyebrows unobtrusively and can be used as a shadow when applied lightly over a dab of oil or cream. The new box is an attractive dressing table item, with a mottled green and gold finish, and the slide cover fits snugly over the box, which contains two grooves, one for the tube of mascara and another for the brush. The price is very reasonable. Want the trade name?

ONE of the most efficient and inexpensive tweezers I have ever used, has scissor handles for a firm grip, and is curved so that you can work quickly and surely, without going through contortions before the mirror. It costs 25 cents, comes with pastel colored handles, and lasts almost indefinitely. The same manufacturer, who has a long and intriguing list of eye beauty aids, makes a mechanical lash curler that is harmless and that gives your lashes a long-lived and natural looking upward sweep. To get the best and most permanent effect, apply mascara first, then use the curler. The lashes stay curled from 12 to 14 hours when you follow directions carefully. The price of the gadget is $1, and it, too, lasts and lasts.

If you'd like to try using pencil for shadowing the eyelids, you'll be glad to know that one of the world's best-known eye cosmetic firms has a blue pencil that is harmless, smooth-marking and a heavenly shade of deep, blue-green. You simply draw a firm line close to the base of your lashes, then blur the edges with your fingertips, so that it does not look artificial. Ten cents for this little gem. In the same line, you'll find an eyelash tonic cream (also for ten cents) that will do wonders in promoting the growth of your brows and lashes and in keeping them lustrous and healthy. Of course, you must apply it liberally every night, in order to secure these results! I'll be glad to send you the trade name of these two beauty aids.

[*Please turn to page* 17]

"HE DOESN'T KISS ME ANYMORE!"
HE SAID MY LIPS WERE TOO RED AND SMEARY
WHY DON'T YOU USE *TANGEE?* IT'S ORANGE IN THE STICK, BUT IT CHANGES LIKE MAGIC TO A LOVELY SHADE OF BLUSH ROSE ON YOUR LIPS
PAINTED GLARING LIPS
TANGEE GLOWING LIPS
LATER
SWEETHEART—I'VE JUST GOT TO KISS THOSE PRETTY LIPS!
THERE IS MAGIC IN *TANGEE*
"GIRLS, DON'T LET A 'PAINTED LOOK' SPOIL YOUR ROMANCE! CHANGE TO TANGEE, THE LIPSTICK THAT ISN'T PAINT, THE ONLY LIPSTICK WITH THE MAGIC TANGEE COLOR CHANGE PRINCIPLE! MAKES YOUR LIPS IRRESISTIBLE!! SEND THE COUPON NOW!"
World's Most Famous Lipstick
TANGEE
ENDS THAT PAINTED LOOK
39¢ AND $1.10

SEND COUPON for TANGEE'S MIRACLE MAKE-UP SET, containing generous samples of Tangee Lipstick, Rouge Compact, Creme Rouge, and Face Powder . . . 10c

FREE CHARM TEST!—an amazing new chart that actually measures your charm! Reveals your personality, gives you self-confidence, ability to attract men. Approved by an eminent psychologist. Sent FREE with Tangee's 10¢ Miracle Make-Up Set.

F107

MIRACLE MAKE-UP SET and FREE CHARM TEST

—an amazing new chart that actually measures your charm!

The George W. Luft Co., 417 Fifth Ave., N.Y.C.

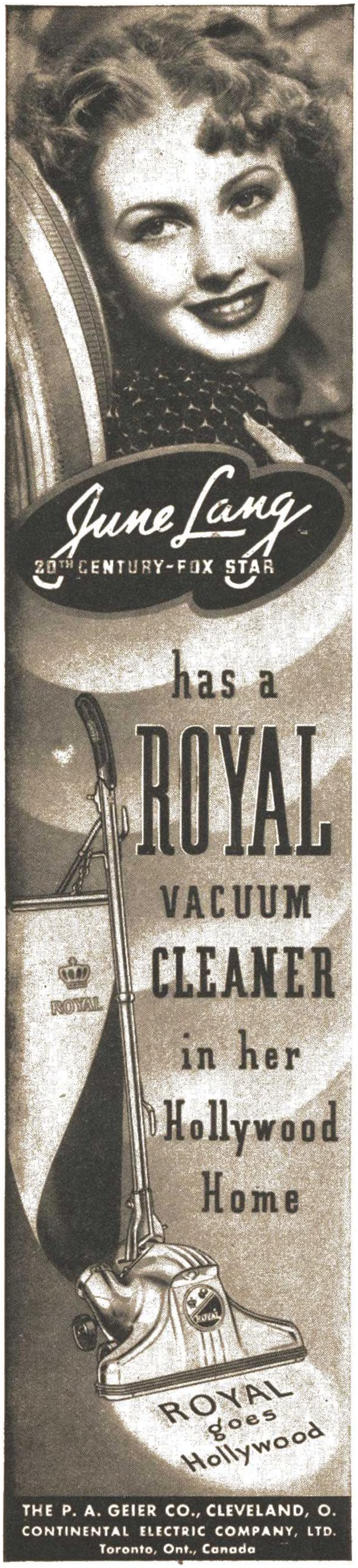
Please rush Miracle Make-Up Set of sample Tangee Lipstick, Rouge Compact, Creme Rouge, Face Powder. I enclose 10¢ (stamps or coin). (15¢ in Canada.) Also send me FREE the new Tangee Charm Test.

Check Shade of Powder Desired ☐ Flesh ☐ Rachel ☐ Light Rachel

Name________ Please Print

Address________

City________ State________



THE P. A. GEIER CO., CLEVELAND, O.
CONTINENTAL ELECTRIC COMPANY, LTD.
Toronto, Ont., Canada

BORN

OCTOBER PREDICTIONS:

★ **ARIES**—Good for proposals, but does not favor engagements of long standing.

★ **TAURUS** — Put aside your fears of love failure for there is happiness ahead.

★ **GEMINI**—There are two love affairs, but be cautious in making your decision.

★ **CANCER**—This month favors business contacts and meeting of new friends.

★ **LEO**—Beware of a romance with a married man. Use your head instead of your heart.

★ **VIRGO**—Do not accept love and kisses of which you are doubtful. Hold unto the old love.

★ **LIBRA**—You face a new era in love. Be prepared for excitement and happiness.

★ **SCORPIO**—You can win the love you desire, but guard your jealous nature.

★ **SAGITTARIUS** — Your most pleasant contacts may come through business acquaintances.

★ **CAPRICORN** — A romantic decision at this time may baffle you. Let your heart rule your head.

★ **AQUARIUS**—Be careful of compromising positions that might threaten your reputation and cause trouble.

★ **PISCES**—Be alert to your own chances for happiness and do not yield to sympathy.

TO THE Libra-born, love is the most important thing in the world! Does your birthdate fall between September 23 and October 22? If so, you were truly born to love! The very essence of your being is romantic, for the glamorous and thrilling love planet Venus is your ruling star.

Under its beneficent rays, have you been led to your own exciting love destiny? If not, perhaps you can learn something of the reasons for romantic failure, and be guided by the stars, that rule your life, into the fulfilment of your dreams.

Libra has been endowed with a very magnetic nature. You need never worry about not attracting romance. Your main concern must be to single out the right man from among the many who may be admirers! Somewhat tempted to be flirtatious, you may put off the vital decision until your mind is so puzzled you cannot make the right decision.

When we examine the love lives of our most prominent motion picture stars who were born in Libra, we are inclined to see this law in action. First, we have charming Janet Gaynor. Her mistake in her first marriage might have been avoided, if she had made her decision more calmly. Born in the Sign of Libra, she might have married any one of several men who were interested in her. Her fatal mistake was due to that strange quality of the Libra mind which causes them to often mistake infatuation for romance.

Then there are the romantic records of Carol Lombard and Constance Bennett, both born in Libra. Their mistakes brought the penalty of

TO LOVE

BY NORVELL

heartaches and, finally, separation!

YOU, being a Libra-born, should not make a similar mistake! Your marriage Signs are pointed out by astrology. Examine these dates carefully, and see if they are not compatible to your own love nature. Astrology says you can be happy in love with the Sign of Gemini, May 21 to June 20 (typified by Johnny Weissmuller)—with Aquarius, January 20 to February 18 (Ronald Colman or Clark Gable type)—or with a man born in the Sign of Cancer, June 21 to July 22 (Richard Dix). Of course, you may be that happy exception among Libra-born who can merge with any Sign in the Zodiac, and if this is the case, happiness awaits you in marriage!

WHAT romantic destiny awaits those of you who were born in other Signs of the Zodiac? Let us pull aside the mystic veil and find out what conditions will exist in the stars for this entire month. The following predictions are based on the Sun position in the various Signs, and applies to the different months regardless of what year you were born in.

ARIES—March 21 to April 19

A fairly fortunate month for all affairs of the heart. Good for proposals, but does not favor engagements of long standing. This month promises decisive action where there has been opposition in love. Take the bull by the horns and make up your mind to win the man of your choice, for you will never have a better time than this month!

TAURUS—April 20 to May 20

You are favored in romance at this time. Venus, your ruling planet, gives you magnetism and charm. Enlarge your social contacts, and for those of you who have not yet found your dream man, the stars hold out the alluring promise of romantic conquest. Put aside your fears of love failure, for your unhappy love experiences should not intrude on your present happiness. The month may not favor certain types of Taurus who have been married hastily, or for spite, and divorce may occupy the minds of some Taurus-born, but this is not the month for decisive action.

[Please turn to page 98]

WHY AREN'T BABIES BORN WITH BLACKHEADS?

7 out of 10 women blame their skin for blackheads, when they should blame their cleansing method

By Lady Esther

Everywhere I go I hear women say "Oh! well, there's nothing I can do about it, I guess I was born with this kind of skin."

They're referring, of course, to hateful, mocking, stubborn blackheads. But stop a minute and think! Did you ever see a baby with blackheads? Of course not. Then where do those blackheads come from?

These blemishes are tiny specks of dirt which become wedged in your pores.

How do they start?

It's sad but true, blackheads take root because your cleansing methods fail. You know you can't wash blackheads away. And they only laugh at your surface cleanser. The longer these blackheads stay in your skin, the blacker and more noticeable they grow.

Switch to a Penetrating Cream

See with your own eyes, the amazing improvement in your skin when a cream really penetrates the dirt in your pores.

Let me send you, free and postpaid, a generous tube of Lady Esther Four Purpose Face Cream, so that you can prove every statement I make. It is an active cream. It's penetrating, because it penetrates pore-dirt. You can see the results. You can feel the difference.

When your free supply of cream arrives, smooth on enough to cover your face and neck. At the very first touch your skin will perk up. Why? Because my cream is a cooling, soothing, refreshing cleanser.

When you wipe it off, you may be shocked to see how grimy the cloth looks. But it's a sign this penetrating cream goes after deep-down dirt that causes those blackheads.

Write now for your free supply

Just send me the coupon today, and by return mail I will send you my generous gift tube of Lady Esther Face Cream. I'll also send you all ten shades of my Face Powder free, so you can see which is your most flattering color—see how Lady Esther Face Cream and Face Powder work together to give you perfect skin smoothness. Mail me the coupon today.

(You can paste this on a penny postcard)

Lady Esther, 2030 Ridge Ave., Evanston, Ill.

Please send me a free supply of Lady Esther Four Purpose Face Cream; also all ten shades of your Face Powder, free and postpaid.

Name..........

Address..........

City..........State..........

(If you live in Canada, write Lady Esther, Toronto, Ontario) (37)

"Oh...THAT girl!"

A DEVASTATING WAY TO DESCRIBE A GIRL

A GIRL might just as well wear a tag when people refer to her as "Oh, *that* girl!"

For she is marked as a person unpleasant to be with—a person to be avoided because she carries the ugly odor of underarm perspiration on her person and clothing.

You can't expect people, men especially, to tolerate this in a girl, no matter how attractive she may be in other ways.

The smart modern girl knows that her underarms need *special daily* care. Soap and water alone are not enough.

And she knows the quick easy way to give this care. Mum!

Quick to use. Harmless to clothing. Half a minute, when you're dressing, is all you need to use Mum. Or use it after dressing, any time. For Mum is harmless to clothing.

Soothing to skin. It's soothing to the skin, too. You can use it right after shaving the underarms.

Doesn't prevent natural perspiration. And you should know this—that Mum prevents every trace of perspiration odor without affecting natural perspiration itself.

Don't label yourself as *"the girl who needs Mum."* Use it regularly every day and you'll be safe! Bristol-Myers Co., 630 Fifth Ave., New York.

MUM

USE MUM ON SANITARY NAPKINS, TOO and you'll never have a moment's worry about this source of unpleasantness.

takes the odor out of perspiration

THE NEWLY WEDS ENTERTAIN "IN-LAWS"

OWING to the fact that I go to business every day, have no maid and live in a small apartment, I haven't entertained my husband's family as yet, even though I have been married for three months. I haven't a table large enough to seat them all and I don't know what to do.

Why don't you have them over for a Saturday night buffet supper? They'll enjoy this just as much as a large formal dinner, I'm sure.

The other evening when my sister-in-law was over for dinner, she kept asking me how much I paid for this, and how much I paid for that until I became very annoyed and was rude to her. Now my husband is furious because he said I insulted her. What should I have done?

That was a difficult situation to handle, but, by being tactful, you could have avoided offending both your sister-in-law and your husband. It was terribly rude, of course, for your sister-in-law to ask such impertinent questions and should such an occasion arise again, I would suggest that you try evading her questions, as sweetly as possible, by changing the subject.

We live in the country and I'm having my husband's family out for the week-end. They will arrive by train and, since we have only a small car, should I arrange for another car to meet them also?

You can make arrangements with your local taxi company to have a taxi waiting for them. Take care of the bill before they arrive and then, when the train comes in, you can take as many as possible in your car and usher the others to the waiting taxi. You simply say: "Please don't tip the driver. It's all been arranged."

When week-end guests arrive at my home, should I have them shown to their rooms immediately?

I'd suggest you ask them if they'd care to go to their rooms first. If they've had a hot, tiresome train ride, they'd perhaps prefer freshening up a bit before doing anything else.

My "in-laws" are coming to dinner and I don't want to pull any boners. Will you please answer the following questions for me?

1. Should water glasses be filled before the guests take their places at the table? Should the glasses be filled to the top?
2. Should the plates be heated for hot dishes?
3. Should plates be placed under sherbet glasses?
4. From which side should plates be placed and removed?
5. May salad be cut with a knife?

1. *Yes. Fill the glasses three-quarters full.*
2. *Serve hot food on heated plates; cold food on chilled plates.*
3. *Yes.*
4. *Stand at the left side to place or remove dishes.*
5. *Yes, with a silver-bladed knife.*

PRESENTING—MISS TYPICAL AMERICA

AT LAST, we've found her! The one girl in the whole United States thought by competent judges most deserving the title, MISS TYPICAL AMERICA.

Her name is Eleanor Fisher. She lives in Chicago. You have already seen her picture on the cover of this magazine and we believe you will agree she has beauty, plus intelligence, plus personality.

When TRUE CONFESSIONS started in several months ago to comb this country for the one girl most deserving the title Miss Typical America we knew we had a big job—but how big we didn't know. Thousands of you sent in your photographs. We were flooded—and glad of it. It has taken weeks for Oscar Serlin, famous talent scout and Associate Producer with David O. Selznick, along with Fred MacMurray, Paramount star, to select the winners.

Today, as this is being written, Miss Fisher is on her way to Hollywood as a guest of TRUE CONFESSIONS, all expenses paid. She has already been given her check for $500.00 and she will receive her talent interview with Mr. Serlin within a few days. Mr. Serlin is currently casting *Gone With the Wind*, and is known as the "discoverer" of Fred MacMurray, Gladys Swarthout, Frances Farmer, Gail Patrick and many other Hollywood stars. His latest find is twelve-year-old Tommy Kelly of New York to play *Tom Sawyer* in the David O. Selznick film of that title.

Who knows, perhaps our Miss Typical America will be a movie queen tomorrow! Watch for pictures of her in newsreels and fan magazines. We'll keep you informed on how she makes out in Hollywood. Meanwhile, meet the girls lucky enough to win prizes in our biggest of all contests.

THE WINNER

**Presenting Miss Typical America—
Eleanor Fisher, of Chicago, Ill.**

Miss Fisher, whose warm, lovable likeness graces the cover of this magazine and whose exquisite figure is shown in a bathing suit on page 28, is twenty years old. She is a graduate of the Lake View High School on the North side of Chicago (the same high school by the way, that Janet Gaynor attended) and has always been anxious to get into pictures—as who, of our readers, hasn't? She has had singing and dancing lessons and is a good athlete; preferring horseback riding and tennis best of all, with swimming and dancing next. Miss Fisher has rich, red-brown hair and hazel eyes.

The second prize of $200.00 goes to vivacious Bebe Anderson, of Birmingham, Ala. Miss Anderson's brunette charm is clearly shown by her photograph. She is still at college and she too plans a movie career.

Priscilla Groff, nineteen-year-old student of Worcester, Mass., wins the third award of $100.00. Miss Groff is a "brownette"—that is, her coloring is chestnut brown hair and sparkling brown eyes, whose personality fairly sings to you from her picture!

Frances Sims of Dallas, Texas, is the fourth prize winner. Miss Sims is a brunette, whose rich coloring and expressive eyes make her a charming American type. She receives $50.00 in cash.

The fifth prize winner is blonde Sondra Jonsson of New York City, whose pure Nordic beauty and classical features make her, too, a TYPICAL AMERICAN GIRL type. Miss Jonsson receives $50.00 in cash.

Miss Stella Ochman, of Bridgeport, Conn., a former "Miss Connecticut" beauty contest winner has the sweetness and charm

[Please turn to page 98]

SO I GAVE HER DE WOIKS, JUDGE
She always swiped my Kleenex*!
Williams

Stand up for your rights, men . . . adopt the

KLEENEX* HABIT

during Colds

● When sniffles start, every man knows how important it is to adopt the habit of using Kleenex Disposable Tissues. Keep a box of your *own* at home, another at the office.

Soft, soothing Kleenex is easy on the nose. It saves money; costs less than handkerchief laundering. What's more, Kleenex Tissues tend to retain germs, thus check the spread of colds through the family.

And men — don't forget Kleenex to wipe spectacles, to clean pipes, to dry razor blades.

Keep Kleenex Tissues in Every Room And in the Car, too.

To remove face creams and cosmetics . . . To apply powder, rouge . . . To dust and polish . . . For the baby . . . *And in the car*— to wipe hands, windshield and greasy spots.

KLEENEX
DISPOSABLE TISSUES

No waste! No mess! Pull a tissue — the next one pops up ready for use!

KLEENEX*

DISPOSABLE TISSUES

(*Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Patent Office)

Quickly . . .
Correct Your Figure Faults
Perfolastic Not Only CONFINES, It also REMOVES Ugly Bulges!
GIRDLE OR BRASSIERE may be worn separately

IF YOU DO NOT Reduce 3 INCHES in 10 DAYS

. . . it will cost you nothing!

BECAUSE so many Perfolastic wearers reduce *more* than 3 inches we believe we are justified in making the above unqualified agreement. Thousands of women today owe their slim, youthful figures to this safe, quick way of reduction. "Hips 12 inches smaller," says Miss Richardson. "Lost 60 pounds and reduced 9 inches", writes Mrs. Derr.

Immediately Appear Inches Smaller

■ You appear inches smaller at once and yet are so comfortable you can scarcely realize that every minute you wear the Perfolastic garments you are *actually reducing* at hips, waist, thighs and diaphragm. Every move you make puts the massage-like action to work at just the spots where fat first accumulates.

No Diet, Drugs or Exercises!

■ You do not have to risk your health or change your comfortable mode of living in any way . . . and with the loss of fat come increased pep and energy.

■ Why not test Perfolastic NOW . . . and prove what it will do for you? You do not risk one penny. If it does not reduce your waist and hips 3 inches in 10 days it will cost you nothing! Learn the details of our 10-Day Trial Offer in the FREE illustrated booklet!

Quickly Reduces Hips, Thighs and Diaphragm.

Takes away Abdominal Fat and "Bulge Derriere".

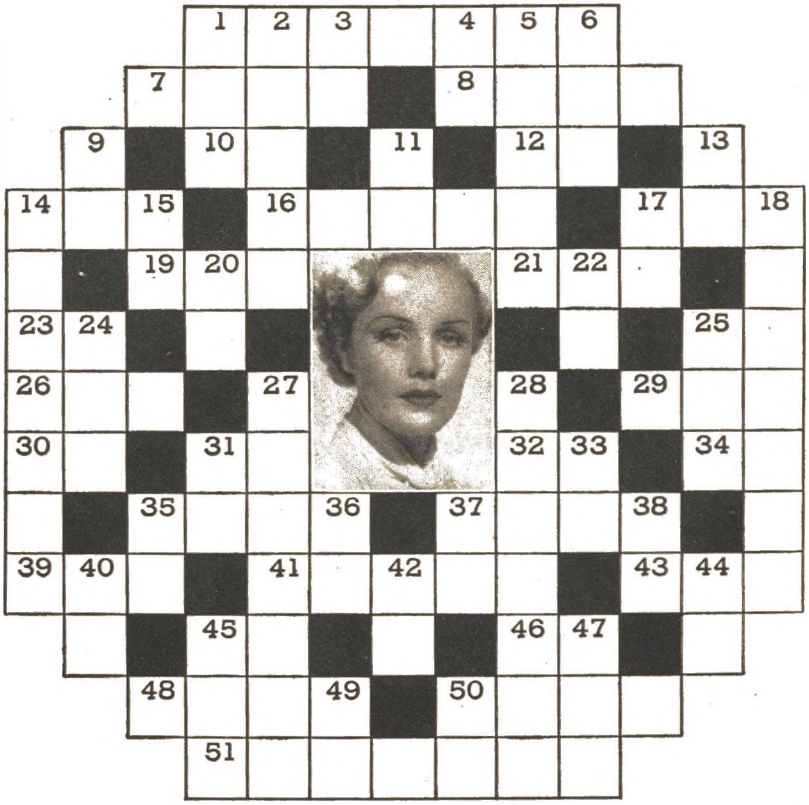
TEST Perfolastic at our expense!

SEND FOR TEN DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER!

PERFOLASTIC, Inc.
Dept. 710, 41 E. 42nd St., New York, N.Y.
Please send me FREE BOOKLET in plain envelope, also sample of perforated material and particulars of your 10-DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER!

Name____________________
Address____________________

MOVIE CROSSWORD PUZZLE



For solution see November TRUE CONFESSIONS

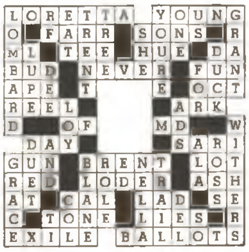
ACROSS

1. You'll see her in *The Toast of New York.*
7. *Turn Off the ———.*
8. *Wings ——— Honolulu.*
10. Russell Gleason (init.).
12. Initials of actress lately divorced from Bruce Cabot.
14. Receptacle for storing a film.
16. Comedian married to June Collyer.
17. ——— *To the Races.*
19. *We Have ——— Moments.*
21. Relation of 10 Across to James Gleason.
23. Notice telling what is playing at your favorite theater (abbr.).
25. Beverly's initials.
26. Clara Bow's husband.
29. Grant Withers portrays *Jungle ———.*
30. Initials of husband of 1 Across.
31. *The ——— Getter.*
32. *History Is Made ——— Night.*
34. Gilbert Emery (init.).
35. *That ——— Here Again.*
37. Descriptive of Stepin Fetchit.
39. Conrad Nagel stars in *Navy ———.*
41. *Dodge City ———.*
43. *The Last of ——— Cheyney.*
45. Initials of a star of *Shall We Dance?*
46. Alice White (init.).
48. *Hubert* in *Top of the Town.*
50. ——— *and Eights.*
51. Comedian often teamed with Mary Boland.

DOWN

1. *Make Way ——— Tomorrow.*
2. Actor wed to Ann Sothern.
3. Miss Nagel's initials.
4. Ginger Rogers often ——— stars with 45 Across.
5. Feminine lead in *The Thirteenth Chair.*
6. ——— *Devils.*
9. His last name is Hould.
11. Initials of Lupe's husband.
13. *King ——— Gamblers.*
14. First name of 51 Across.
15. *Show Them ——— Mercy.*
17. ——— *the Avenue.*
18. Last name of 1 Across (poss.).
20. *Wake ——— and Live.*
22. Initials of one often co-starred with Stan Laurel.
24. Mrs. McCrea.
25. Gene Autry starred in *The ——— Show.*
27. *Henry VIII* in *The Prince and the Pauper.*
28. *The Good Old Soak* in person.
31. Melvyn Douglas was born in this state (abbr.).
33. *Speed ——— Spare.*
35. *This Is ——— Affair.*
36. Sig Rumann (init.).
37. Master of ceremonies in *Nobody's Baby.*
38. First name of Director Wyler (abbr.).
40. Guy Kibbee was *Mary Jane's ———.*
42. ——— *Good ——— Married.*
44. Initials of leading man in *Personal Property.*
45. Hairy coat of Buck, St. Bernard actor.
47. Short for brother of 51 Across, a director.
49. Initials of Mrs. Melvyn Douglas.
50. ——— St. John.

Last Month's Solution



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M	L	■	T	E	E	■	H	U	E	■	D	A
B	U	D	■	N	E	V	E	R	■	F	U	N
A	P	E	■	T				E	■	O	C	T
R	E	E	L	■				■	A	R	K	
D	■	■	O	F				M	D	■	■	W
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The Vanity Case

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11]

DON'T make the common mistake of using mascara and shadow without also tending to the health of your eyes and the delicate skin around them. Long, curling lashes are nullified by blood-shot eyes or crow's feet. Regular use of an eye cream around the eyes to keep the skin soft and young, daily use of a cleaning lotion in the eyes and prevention of wrinkles between the eyes are all "musts" for complete eye beauty.

I can send you the trade name of an excellent eye lotion, on the market for many years, that is safe, pleasant to use and inexpensive. This amber colored lotion is applied by means of a convenient and sanitary dropper stopper, and makes the eyes feel better and *look* better. It should be used always in the morning, to help you get rid of that sleepy-eyed look, after your eyes have been over-worked, and after you have been outdoors in the sun and wind for any length of time.

One of the most disconcerting of facial wrinkles, and the most damaging to eye beauty, is the single or double vertical line that often appears between the eyes as a result of squinting and contracting the forehead muscles in a frown. To prevent its appearance, use plenty of lubricating cream in this area and train yourself rigidly to keep from squinting or frowning.

To hasten its departure, once it has appeared, there are some little medicated pink tabs, shaped like tiny wings, that can be applied over the line. Naturally, they can be used on any facial line with equal success. Apply them at night, when the facial muscles are relaxed, or during the day when you are busy at some eye-straining work. After applying a good tissue cream on the offending line, leaving it on for awhile, and then removing it, moisten the tab and press it over the line firmly with the palm of the hand. To remove, simply moisten again, and draw off gently.

There is an introductory size package of 30 tabs for 35 cents.

HERE we go, from eye to toe—but I must tell you about the new boon to toenail tinters! It's a pair of rubber gadgets with blunt prongs that fit between your toes and keep them from overlapping, while you are applying liquid polish and while it is drying thoroughly. They are time-savers and polish-savers as well as temper-savers, for every girl who likes to match her toes to her fingertips. One dollar buys the pair. If you are interested, I'll be delighted to send you the manufacturer's name.

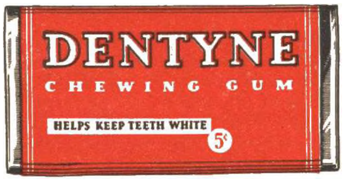
A Hollywood firm making cosmetics for the stars and for you, has just introduced a new version of its very fine double vanity, with a compartment for cake rouge and one for loose powder. The compact is burnished gold, with bright gold panels—practical enough for daytime, yet glamorous enough for evening. The loose powder compartment is leak-proof, with a special slide opening that opens effortlessly and snaps firmly shut. The fine-textured rouge comes in four beautifully blended shades. How this finished compact can be turned out for only $2 is one of the things that puzzles me no end. Want the trade name?

Lucky old Highlander

First Chief of his Clan—tradition says this old Highland warrior never had a toothache! Tough, chewy foods gave his teeth ample exercise—kept them in prime condition! His descendants eat soft, refined foods, giving teeth too little exercise.

WISE MODERNS CHEW DENTYNE—because Dentyne's firmer consistency invites more vigorous chewing—gives teeth and gums the active exercise they *need!* It stimulates circulation in gums and mouth tissues, helps make them firmer, healthier—and wakens the salivary glands, promoting self-cleansing. Dentyne helps keep your teeth stronger, healthier—and cleaner!

IT TASTES SO SPICILY TEMPTING—you'll be keen about Dentyne's fragrant and delicious flavor! And the flat Dentyne package (an exclusive feature) is so exceptionally handy to slip into your pocket or purse.



HELPS KEEP TEETH WHITE — MOUTH HEALTHY

DENTYNE

DELICIOUS CHEWING GUM

A PROBLEM STORY

I want to leave MY HUSBAND SHOULD I?

PRIZES FOR YOUR LETTERS SEE PAGE 55

I AM seriously considering leaving my husband.

Another man? Yes, there is another man, but there never could have been another if my husband, himself, had been different. And so you may say that the real reason I am considering breaking my marriage does not lie in this other man at all, but in the basic situation itself.

I shall receive no sympathy whatsoever from anybody when I do leave him—*if* I do. I will be universally condemned by his relatives and my relatives and all our friends.

"Such a perfectly charming chap!" everyone will say indignantly. "And so devoted to Joan. How *can* she?"

My husband, himself, will be utterly shocked, deeply wounded, especially at the reason which I shall give him. For what I intend to say in the event that I leave—and I must make the decision very soon—is something like this: "Don, I have a dreadful confession to make to you. I am not worthy to be your wife. I have been unfaithful to you. And now I find I am going to have a child. Not your child, Don, but Malcolm's, so you see why I *must* get free quickly and marry Mal. For the sake of our child."

In the long run, this will be the easiest way for Donald. He will come to think of me as utterly undeserving of his devotion and, with that admirable firmness of his, he will eventually put me out of his heart and his thoughts and his life and re-marry. There is nothing weakly sentimental about Don—never! I still recall the positiveness with which he dealt with my tendency to weep over dead birds and thin horses and give money to every beggar I passed. It was morbid, he said, and silly, and as for giving beggars money, it was actually criminal.

My dreadful confession will be a lie, but Don will never know that. There *is* going to be a baby. I have discovered it just today. But it is not Malcolm's baby. It is Don's. And I have not been unfaithful to Don, unless you call letting Malcolm kiss me goodnight once unfaithful. Or unless you go deeper still and say that my love for Malcolm is unfaithful to Don.

The rather fantastic part of the whole thing is that it is really because of the baby that the idea, with which I have only played occasionally when I was very unhappy, has suddenly become a pressing reality—the idea of leaving Don and marrying Malcolm. I telephoned Malcolm to meet me as soon as I left the doctor's office. I told him what I had found out and watched his dear face turn white. But what he said was, "And are you going to bring a child up in his home? Joan, come to me and I swear it will be exactly like my own baby to me. Because it will be yours and *whatever* belongs to you is dear to me."

I know that is true. I know how considerate, how thoughtful of other people's rights Mal is. I know that in the home Mal and I would make, my child would have a chance to flower into a charming and useful personality. Whereas, in Don's house—

But I haven't really explained about Don, have I? It's going to sound like a sort of anti-climax, but it isn't. It is simply that he has some sort of master-slave complex which makes it, apparently, absolutely necessary for him to manage and to dominate everybody with whom he comes in close contact.

He was much older than I when we married; nearly twenty years. He was (and is) a fairly successful business man who has built up a rather flourishing business of his own. But nobody can work for Don who isn't a "yes man." He fires, promptly, every individual who dares to think for himself and think differently from Don. He has a group of cowed people who do exactly what they are told to do, and he won't see that he would be ten times as successful and make ten times as much money if he'd allow them a little freedom and initative. He won't see that really efficient people with brains don't like to work for him.

In his home it is worse because his wife is peculiarly his property. As long as I do exactly what he plans for me, agree with every idea of his, never cross him in any way at all, Don is generous, affectionate, easy to live with. But if I display the least rebellion, he promptly handles me as a general might handle a disobedient private. He can't quite shut me up and put me on bread and water, but he can and has taken away my spending money and treated me to a course of icy, silent displeasure which has made my home unbearable to me.

I SUPPOSE part of the difficulty lies in my disposition. A stronger woman might have fought Don successfully, but I am gentle and timid by nature. I can't bear to be treated coldly and unkindly. I can't endure lack of harmony in my home. I am passionately anxious to please the people I love and make them happy, and I wilt like a flower in winter winds under displeasure.

I adored Don when I married him. He was—he *is* so handsome and masterful. I trembled under his kiss and ached and burned and glowed in his arms. I may never love anybody else in just that way. And so, given my disposition and my love for him and that twenty years between us, it was almost inevitable that I should crumple. Once I had given way, for the sake of peace and harmony. I found I had only fed the flames of his desire for complete domination.

And now, today, there isn't any detail of my life too small for Don to supervise and manage. I am told what to wear, what to eat, what to think, where to go, when to come home . . . *everything.* Sometimes I suspect that he makes me change the way I am doing things simply to show his power.

For instance, I love tea. Well, Don has decided that tea is not good for me, and even the servants are instructed to [*Please turn to page* 81]

Lovely as a dream, Jane Bryan as she appears in Warner Bros. "CONFESSIONS." She's already done outstanding work in "MARKED WOMAN" and "KID GALAHAD." Watch her! She's going places!

MY HEART seemed to turn over and stop beating when I saw that newspaper. For there, on the very first page of the tabloid, was a picture of a nearly nude girl. A girl completely naked except for a spangled G-string and an ornate head-dress.

The headline screamed: LEWD AND INDECENT!

Beneath the picture was a line reading, "Sara Lou Parsons, One of Eleven Strip-Teasers Arrested in Burlesque Raids."

And the photograph was . . . *of me!*

It was only later, after my first shock of shame, that I had time to worry about what would happen back home when folks found out about me. For the first time in nearly a year I was glad that neither mother nor daddy was alive to learn the sordid truth. But all the other people down home in Mississippi would find out soon enough. In my letters I had written that I was working in a library.

And now there was this frightful picture of me, stripped of clothes and decency, for all the world to gloat over!

I was only nineteen, but already my life, I felt, was ruined.

Looking back, Mississippi, and the little town where I was born—I'd better not name it—seemed like a misty dream. So much had happened in the year I had been in New York—before this final, ghastly thing. I almost wished now that I had stayed at home and married Clay Horgan, and lived on the waning glories of the past.

For that was all most of us had down home. Memories of the past. True, we had Traditions, and Ancestry, and Pride. But not much ambition, I am afraid. And you can't live on these things alone.

That was one reason I left home after my parents died, suddenly and frightfully, in an automobile accident. I wanted to make something of myself.

I remember the night I told Clay my plans. At first he thought I was fooling. "Why, honey child!" he protested, laughing. "What big ideas you'ah getting! Have you forgotten I'm going to marry you?"

I shook my head. "That's just it, Clay. And I'm afraid."

"Why, Sarah Lou!"

"Please!" I insisted. "You don't understand. I mean, I'm afraid if I marry you now, neither one of us will ever amount to anything. We'll be just like all the others here. We'll have a little money when it's a good cotton year, and nothing when it's a bad one. We won't ever be able to get out of the rut our parents were in. There will always be debts hanging over our heads; never enough money to get by on—I can't do it. I won't!"

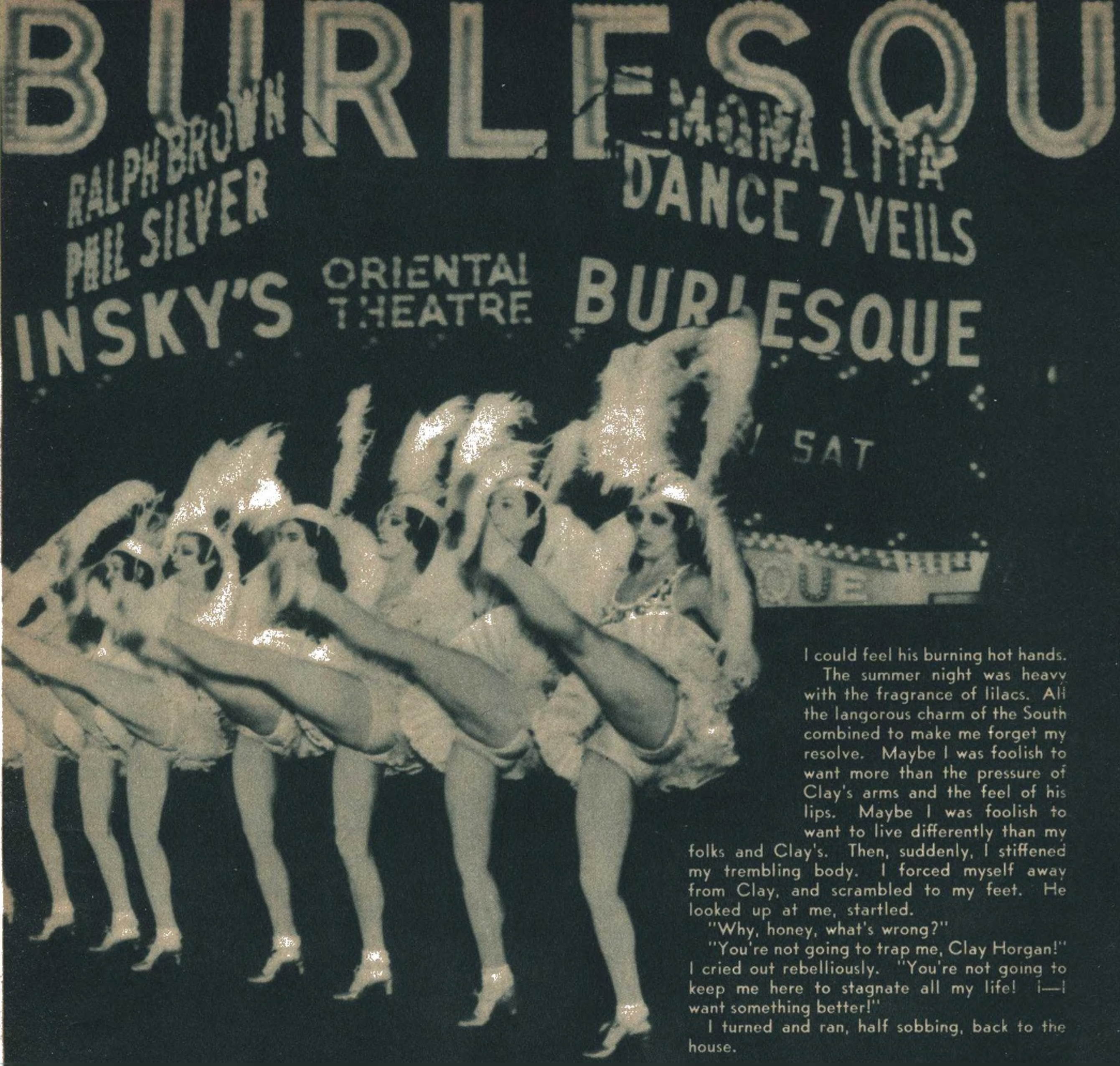
"Seems to me to be a pretty good rut," Clay grinned lazily. "We'll always have a house to live in, and enough food. There's good hunting and fishing and riding hereabouts, and plenty of corn licker. What more's a man want?" He reached out and took me in his arms and added huskily, "When he has you to love!"

Lately when he held me close and kissed me, funny little shivers raced through my body. I had known Clay all my life. We had played kissing games all through our childhood, but recently his caresses had changed. At least, for me they had.

Now, when he kissed me, it was something more than an accustomed gesture. His lips were hot and ardent against mine, and through my thin frock

AS the music quickened, I unloosened the snaps of my bra. I was putting it over! The applause was deafening. My painted smile covered my frozen panic as I sang the number.

SECRETS of



I could feel his burning hot hands.

The summer night was heavy with the fragrance of lilacs. All the langorous charm of the South combined to make me forget my resolve. Maybe I was foolish to want more than the pressure of Clay's arms and the feel of his lips. Maybe I was foolish to want to live differently than my folks and Clay's. Then, suddenly, I stiffened my trembling body. I forced myself away from Clay, and scrambled to my feet. He looked up at me, startled.

"Why, honey, what's wrong?"

"You're not going to trap me, Clay Horgan!" I cried out rebelliously. "You're not going to keep me here to stagnate all my life! I—I want something better!"

I turned and ran, half sobbing, back to the house.

TWO weeks later I was in New York. Alone. It hadn't been so easy as all that to leave home. There had been aunts and uncles and dozens of cousins to argue with and persuade and finally to defy. I was told I was too young. I was reminded that nice, Southern girls don't go looking for work, anyway. And, of course, I was warned, over and over again, about New York.

So I ran away.

I had a little over a hundred dollars—representing my parents' entire estate—when I landed in Manhattan. I was eighteen years old. And I didn't know *anything*, really.

Have you ever wondered about the girls who play in burlesque shows? Here is an honest, decent girl who became a strip teaser because she had to eat! Read her poignant story and judge whether she was *lewd and indecent* as the headlines branded her!

a STRIP TEASER

I soon found out how inexperienced I was when I started looking for work. There just weren't any jobs open for a girl without training. Day after day I tramped the streets, going from office to office, only to hear the same answer.

Then one day I got a chance in a wholesale dress shop, modelling frocks. For the first hour or so I thought my immediate troubles were over. I soon found out how wrong I was.

I was alone in the dressing room when the door suddenly opened, and one of the partners of the firm came in. I caught up a dress and held it in front of me, trying to cover the brief panties and lace bandeau what were my only covering.

He held up a fat hand. "Don't mind me, girlie. You and I are going to be good friends . . . I hope!" He smiled silkily, and moved closer, running his pudgy fingers over my bare shoulder. "You gotta be nice to our customers, too, y'understand?"

I looked at him with frightened eyes. I tried to shrink back against the wall, away from his pawing hands. I begged frantically, "Go away! Leave me alone! Please!"

He glared at me. "What is this, a gag?" His face grew red, and then he laughed harshly. "Listen, sister, if you're that dumb you'd better get the devil out of here!"

"I'm getting!" I promised. Tears misted my eyes as I fumbled into my street clothes. When I got out on the street, I found my whole body was trembling.

That was the way it went. The only jobs I could get were with men who weren't really interested in your work, but only in your body.

I WAS nearly down to my last dollar when I saw an ad in a morning tabloid. CHORUS GIRLS WANTED: No experience necessary. Apply 9 to 11, Blank Theatre, Broadway.

I thought I might as well take another chance. Besides, I had to do *something*, or go back home admitting I had failed. My pride wouldn't let me do that.

There were quite a few other girls backstage at the theatre when I finally found my way there. Fat girls and thin girls and homely girls. And a few young and pretty ones.

I was frightfully nervous. I don't know exactly what I was expecting, but my past experiences had made me wary. So I was pleasantly surprised when I found it was a girl and not a man I was to interview. I found out later she was the chorus captain, and married to one of the comedians in the show.

She had tired blue eyes and brassy blonde hair. She looked me over sharply, and demanded, "Did you bring a practice suit?"

I shook my head.

"Well, fix yourself up somehow, and get into line over there."

I looked at the line of girls she indicated. Some of them were in bathing suits, some wore just flimsy bras and panties, and some in shorts and sweaters. Hesitantly I took off my dress and went over and stood with them.

Marge, the chorus captain, stood in front of us and said crisply: "Now watch me and try to follow. This is the toe prance." She nodded over her shoulder at a tired-looking man at the piano and said, "Okeh, professor."

For the next two hours we practised dance routines, while Marge raged and swore at us. Some of the girls dropped out, and some were thrown out, but I stuck. I had always been a pretty good dancer, and the simple steps were easy after you got the hang of them.

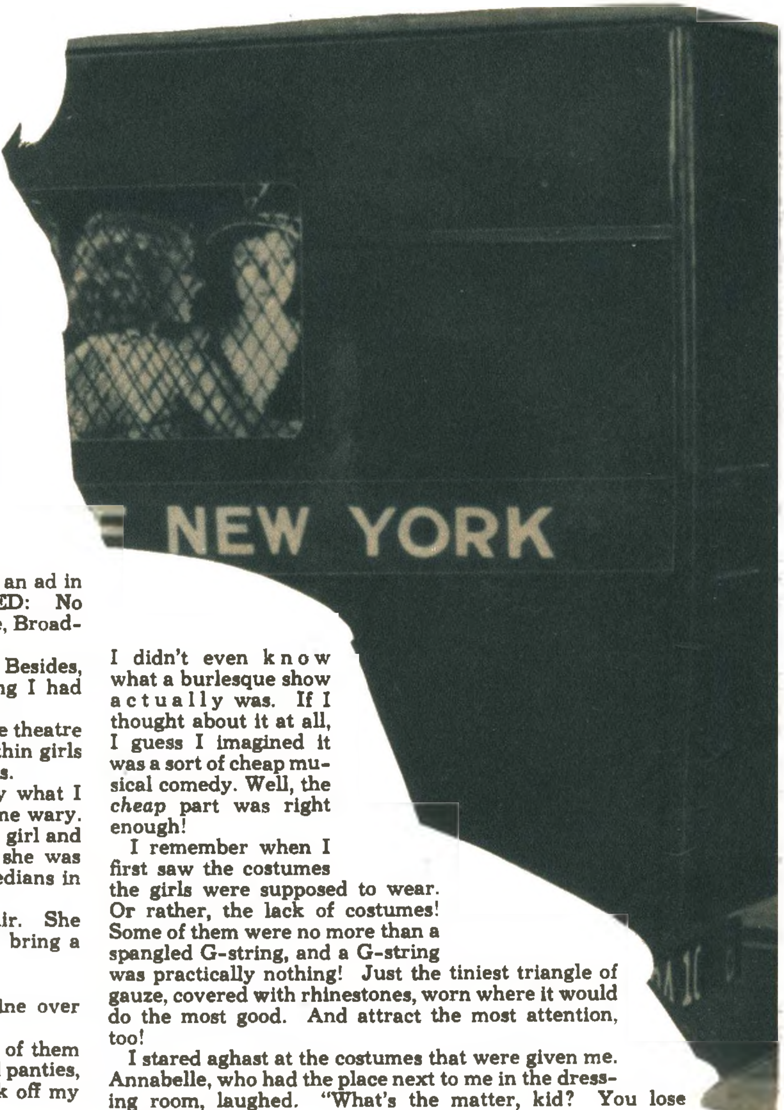
When the morning session was over Marge came up to me. "You'll do, kid, if you want the job. Twenty-four bucks a week, twenty-seven on the road. Okeh?"

I nodded.

"What's your name?"

"Sarah Lou Parsons," I told her. I didn't know then that most girls give any name but their own when they go into burlesque.

There were a lot of things I didn't know . . . then!



I didn't even know what a burlesque show actually was. If I thought about it at all, I guess I imagined it was a sort of cheap musical comedy. Well, the *cheap* part was right enough!

I remember when I first saw the costumes the girls were supposed to wear. Or rather, the lack of costumes! Some of them were no more than a spangled G-string, and a G-string was practically nothing! Just the tiniest triangle of gauze, covered with rhinestones, worn where it would do the most good. And attract the most attention, too!

I stared aghast at the costumes that were given me. Annabelle, who had the place next to me in the dressing room, laughed. "What's the matter, kid? You lose something?"

"There's just a transparent skirt to this," I said, holding up a Spanish outfit. "I mean, I can't find any top."

Annabelle laughed. "What do you want? A fur coat and some red flannels? That's all there is, dearie; there isn't any more!"

"But I can't go out on the stage like that!" I protested. My cheeks flamed at the thought of it. "With—without a bras—and everything!"

Annabelle gave me a twisted sort of smile. Then she said in a friendly tone, "Listen. You won't even be thinking about little things like that when you get out front. You'll be too busy keeping step." She patted me on the shoulder. "Remember, you've got the footlights between you and the audience—and that's a lot more than the average stenographer has between herself and her boss!"

Strangely enough, she was right. I thought that I would be conscious of hundreds of masculine eyes feasting on my nearly nude body all the while I was on the stage, but

GALLERY ENTRANCE

"LET go of me," I stormed as tears of rage flooded my eyes. But Annabelle wasn't even annoyed: "Don't let it worry you, kid," she called out. "This happens every once in a while."

instead I was too occupied with the chorus routine. Besides, the fact that all the other girls were dressed—or undressed—the same way I was helped.

For the first few days I was so busy learning new steps and songs that I really didn't have much time to think about modesty, as far as my body was concerned. And when I did think of it, I thought of all the nasty experiences I had had when I was looking for work, and somehow I felt different about it all. At least, no men were bothering me now.

Then one day as I was coming off-stage after a number, I stumbled against a man in the wings. He caught me by the arm, steadying me.

"You're a new kid here, aren't you?"

I looked up at him. He was tall, and dressed in rumpled tweeds. His features were young, but his face was lined, and his eyes had deep circles under them. I was aware of the mingled odor of whiskey and pipe tobacco.

I drew back, trying to shield my bare body with my hands. Without waiting for me to answer, he went on, "Sometimes new kids interest me. How about some supper after the final show?"

Frightened, I shook my head. "I've got an engagement," I lied, releasing my arm. "Please! I've got to go now."

When I got to the dressing room Annabelle asked, "What did Forest want, kid?"

"A date," I told her. "Who is he?"

"The press agent for the show. He's okeh, except that he's a rum-pot. He won't bite, though, baby."

I shrugged my shoulders. It didn't matter what he would or wouldn't do, as long as it wasn't with me. Suddenly I thought of Clay, back home in Missippi. I wondered what he was doing.

And then I shivered, wondered what he would think if he knew what I was doing!

THE next week the show went on the road. First we played Boston, then Newark and Brooklyn and Jersey City and Philadelphia. Then we started playing split weeks.

In the cold, bleak hours before dawn we would land in the new town, check in at some third-rate hotel, usually two or three to a room, and get a few hours of restless sleep before reporting at the theatre for morning rehearsal.

Even now, after all that has happened, when I hear stories about burlesque girls being more immoral than other girls, as a result of the lives they lead, I am furious. Because in burlesque you just haven't *time* to go on wild parties!

The straight man in the company reminded me a lot of Clay. He had the same slightly, wavy, blonde hair and blue eyes. Of course, he was older, but not too much so.

From the very first he was nice to me. He was always stopping me backstage and asking, "Is everything coming along okeh, kid?"

I'd smile and tell him everything was fine. Sometimes he invited me out for something to eat between shows. Annabelle, who usually roomed

[*Please turn to page* 91]

CHAINED BY HER CARESSES

"DO YOU think it will make your uncle very happy to know that his wife and his beloved nephew whom he raised, are . . ."

WHEN Uncle Ralph married Sonia Suratt, my world crashed around my ears.

As I read his short hastily scrawled letter of announcement, I felt hot and cold with resentment and anger. I longed to be home for just a few minutes so that I could tell him what a fool he had been. And perversely enough, I wanted Sonia to be there, too, so that I could watch her face while I said it.

Oh, it wasn't for any of the usual reasons. Not because I was jealous, or resented having a woman around in the comfortable, informal home my uncle and I had shared for nearly twenty years—ever since my parents' death in an automobile accident the year after I was born. I wasn't afraid his new wife would come between us.

It was just that I couldn't see him happily married to a woman of her type. I was so sure, even then, that she would make him miserable.

It wasn't until much later that I discovered why I had been so concerned and—which of us was eventually going to be more miserable on Sonia's account!

I was at the University in M———; only two hundred

What is the subtle fascination an experienced married woman holds for a college boy? In tragic sorrow, he learned that the Commandment: DO NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE is a law of life as basic as life itself!

miles from our home—seven hours by train—but they hadn't asked me home for the wedding—hadn't wanted me. That was what hurt.

Again I stared at the few lines scribbled across a single sheet of paper: "Sonia Suratt and I were married this morning. When you get this, we will be on our way to Hawaii."

That was all. Not a word about my graduation, which was only three weeks away; no apologies for not inviting me home for the wedding. Nothing to indicate that I would be welcome when I did come home.

I went home, of course, at the end of the term. I had to, really, because there was no place else for me to go. Besides, I don't think I could actually have stayed away. I wanted desperately to see them together; to know for certain that my first impression of Sonia had been right.

Of course, their marriage spoiled my last three weeks at school. I kept thinking about them—wondering where they were and whether they had quarreled yet and—what sort of bridegroom my uncle made.

Uncle Ralph, my father's only brother, was an absolutely swell person. But he was forty-five, and a confirmed bachelor when I came to live with him. That made him—what? Sixty-six, to Sonia's probable thirty-five. I found myself wishing that he had chosen someone comfortably middle-aged and settled and unromantic; someone from among his own circle of friends in Fairmount.

Sonia was a stranger to our town. She was in Fairmount but not of it, if you get what I mean. Nobody ever knew any more about her than they could gather from the neat little name-plate on her dress shop window: "Paris Frocks By Sonia." She told me, later, that her father was an exiled Russian nobleman and her mother a Hungarian dancer, and that she was born and reared in the shadow of a New York sweat shop. It may be true—as anything might be true of Sonia.

All the way home on the train I kept thinking of the first and only time I had seen her. It was during the Christmas holidays. I was in the drug store with a couple of fellows when she came in. The cold had reddened the tip of her nose and chin and etched deep lines around her mouth. I would never have given her a second glance if she had not stared at me so steadily with those curious amber eyes of hers. Her glance caught and held mine for a long moment, while I stood there tingling with some emotion I could not identify. Something electric and vital passed between us in that glance; some mutual attraction drew us mentally close while our physical selves hesitated on the verge of speech. Then someone muttered: "Who's your girl friend, Larry?" the crowd laughed and I could feel myself getting red as I turned quickly away.

Not a pretty woman, Sonia, with her high, flat Slav cheek bones and broad, full, sensuous mouth. Her hair was coarse and black and hung in careless waves almost to her shoulders and her eyebrows were sullen dark lines almost meeting above the bridge of her high arched nose. Her one claim to beauty was her eyes—those strange, narrow, yellow eyes, slanting upward a trifle at the outer corners and framed by incredible lashes. If you happened to look at Sonia's eyes first, you forgot everything else about her.

And Uncle Ralph—my big, bluff, good-natured second father (I don't remember my own father at all)—had married this woman! How they would hate each other, I thought soberly, when the excitement of the honeymoon had worn off a little.

You see, I wasn't thinking of myself at all then. I wasn't being influenced by what Sonia's eyes had promised, in front of the crowd in the drug store that winter day.

"IT will kill him, I interrupted miserably. Uncle Ralph's the soul of honor. Oh, Sonia, why didn't we think of all this that night?"

I WAS home alone a month before they got back. I spent most of my time dodging curious neighbors who wanted to know about "dear Timothy's charming new wife." Old Mrs. Carver across the street was the worst. Long after she got tired of asking me questions I evaded or ignored, I could see her on her porch, watching our house through drawn blinds. The way she rooted around looking for something scandalous or unusual in the affair reminded me of a bloodhound with a fresh scent.

They came home unannounced; just drove up one afternoon in a taxi, as unconcerned as though the whole neighborhood wasn't breaking its collective neck leaning out of windows to watch them.

I met them at the door. Uncle Ralph grabbed my hand and slapped me hard between the shoulders. "Hello, Boy," he yelled affectionately. "Gosh, it's swell to get home. Sonia, this is my nephew, Larry."

She had been watching me narrowly, hands on hips. At Uncle Ralph's words she raised her arms to my neck and kissed me square on the mouth. "Do you mind?" she said over her shoulder to my Uncle. "He's so handsome, this big nephew of yours."

With my heart in my throat I grinned down at her and said the words I had been rehearsing for days: "Hello, Auntie."

Sonia pulled away from me as though I had slapped her. I saw an ominous glitter in her eyes before she deliberately turned her back on me. "Have we time for a cocktail before dinner, Timmy darling?" she asked Uncle Ralph, ignoring me.

"Sure." Uncle Ralph patted her arm. "You just run along to your room—the girl will show you where it is—and I'll mix a couple of Old Fashioneds."

He watched her adoringly as she slowly climbed the stairs. "Isn't she wonderful, Larry?" he sighed.

I thought the emotion that flooded me at that moment was disgust; I know now that it was something else—envy, jealousy perhaps—aroused by Sonia's fleeting kiss and her oblique glance as she left us.

"Gosh, Uncle," I said childishly, trying to wound him, "if you had to get married after all these years, it seems like you could have found someone more suitable than a little foreign dressmaker."

"She's Russian, Larry, but she was born here," said Uncle Ralph mildly, not taking his eyes off the stairs.

It was all so foolish and trivial that I had to laugh. My uncle looked at me, surprised, and then grinned happily and slapped me on the back again.

I'M NOT conceited, but I would have had to be blind and deaf not to notice in the next few weeks that Sonia was trying to make me. And I was flattered. Flattered and excited and —curious. But then, what kid my age wouldn't be, knowing that an exotic, unusual woman like Sonia found him interesting enough to notice?

There wasn't anything too obvious about it. Sonia was too clever for that. Just the lingering caresses of her finger-tips when she handed me something at the table. Or the slight, slow pressure of her body when she passed me on the stairs. Or the way she'd snuggle down next to my uncle on the sofa, and then slide her eyes over to me, to see if I'd noticed.

I noticed, all right! And I noticed how his fingers shook when he touched her, and the way he caressed her when he forgot that I was there.

Sometimes, when I couldn't stand it any longer, I'd get up and leave them alone together. Then it seemed to me, she'd pull away slightly from Uncle Ralph's eager arms and I felt her eyes boring into my back as I left the room.

Sonia was on my mind most of the time after that. I kept wondering what it would be like if she really kissed me—the way she must kiss Uncle Ralph when they were alone. I couldn't help it, any more than I could help dreaming about her, night after night.

That's why I was so afraid when Uncle Ralph told us he had to leave suddenly for Chicago. "Want to go along, Sonia?" he asked a little wistfully. I waited for her answer. If she went, it meant I had been misunderstanding her all these weeks.

"No, you run along, darling," said Sonia. "I simply loathe Chicago."

"Then let me go with you, Unk," I begged desperately. I was pleading with him to guess, somehow, that I wanted to keep out of danger—away from temptation. He laughed. "You stay here and keep Sonia company," he said.

"UNCLE RALPH, this is Mary Slocum, the girl I am going to marry," I said. Sonia barely acknowledged the introduction and, to me, the air seemed tense with her smouldering rage.

That's what I was afraid of! But I couldn't tell him that.

Uncle Ralph left early next morning. And that night, just as I stepped out of the shower, I heard someone pounding on the door. My bedroom and bath connect, so I hurried into the bedroom, pulled on a pair of shorts and a bathrobe and went to the door. The beating of my heart almost choked me, because I was as sure as though it had been arranged, that Sonia would find some reason for coming to my door that night.

"What is it?"

"Larry," Sonia whispered excitedly, "there's a mouse in my room. Please do something—I'm scared to death of them."

I grabbed a golf club and hurried out into the hall.

"Why didn't you call Joe?" I asked. Joe was our handy man and Hilda, his wife, was the cook.

"They're gone for the evening. This is their night off! We're alone here, Larry."

I looked down at her but her face was expressionless. So I followed her to her room and started poking in all the corners with the club. I even used a flash light. Sonia didn't go for bright lights in her room.

"You sure about that mouse, Sonia?" I asked at last.

She shrugged. "Maybe I imagined it, Larry. I thought I heard something scratching." She yawned and stretched and I saw that she hadn't much on under her thin satin robe. "You must be warm after all that work. Let me mix you a drink."

Then I saw that the drinks were already mixed, standing cool and frosty on a lacquered tray on the night table. "Pretty sure of yourself, weren't you?" I said evenly.

"What do you mean?" She held out the glass invitingly and my fingers closed gratefully around its moist smoothness.

I know now that I should have refused to drink with her. I shouldn't even have stayed alone in the house with her, feeling like I did. I guess I knew it then, too, but I wouldn't admit it to myself because— She was so desirable, so provocative, standing there with her eyes on mine and the robe pulled tight to show every rounded line of her figure.

I tasted the drink. "Boy, this is smooth, Sonia."

"Smooth as a woman," she said softly, "and —almost as dangerous."

She kept mixing those drinks as fast as I could take them. When I had finished my fourth, I began to feel sort of hazy and reckless. Sonia seemed the most beautiful—the most desirable woman in the world, lying back in her chair with her eyes half closed and her moist red lips parted invitingly. I had to hang onto the arms of my chair to keep from going to her then. I wanted to kiss her, there where the little pulse was beating so rapidly in her throat.

"Why don't you like me?" Sonia asked suddenly.

I started. I had just been

[*Please turn to page 74*]

Presenting MISS

THE WINNER

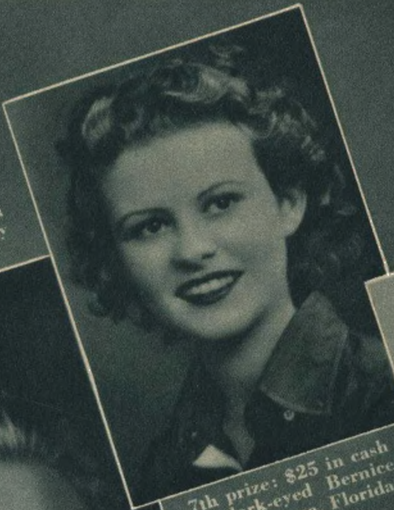
Miss Eleanor Fisher of Chicago, Ill. Her prize: $500 cash; transportation to, and expenses while in Hollywood for a talent interview with Mr. Oscar Serlin, Selznick representative. Miss Fisher is 20 years old; 5 ft. 5½ inches; weight 114 lbs. Reddish-brown hair, hazel eyes and a "divine" figure.

2nd prize: $200 cash to Miss Bebe Anderson, 18-year-old Birmingham, Ala., co-ed whose personality radiates charm.

3rd prize: $100 cash to Priscilla Groff, Worcester, Mass., 19-year-old, charming student.

TRUE CONFESSIONS literally combed the country to find her! Thousands of photographs were examined: Blondes, brunettes, redheads, brownettes-- The loveliest girls in the country competed! Here is our typical **AMERICAN GIRL** and her "runners-up" for the title.

TYPICAL AMERICA



7th prize: $25 in cash to dark-eyed Bernice Pratt, Tampa, Florida.

8th prize: $25 in cash to serene Miriel E. King, Atlantic City, N. J.

5th prize: $50 in cash to Sondra Jonsson, New York City, a lovely blonde with classic features.

4th prize: $50 in cash to Frances Sims, Dallas, Tex., Southern beauty.

9th prize: $25 in cash to a Georgia "peach," Miss Edna Mae Cornelius, Cedartown blonde.

6th prize: $25 in cash to the lovely New England blonde, Stella Ochman of Bridgeport, former "Miss Connecticut."

Read the story on page 1

LOVE FLING OF

"SO you can't give up the thrill of horse-racing!" Terry said tensely. "But I'm going to make you want me so much that you won't be able to live without me either."

A "GIGOLETTE"

Gambling, like a fever, was in her blood. She escorted men to the races—that was her job—But had she the right to gamble with their lives?

IF YOU'VE been around the West Coast race tracks long enough you've heard of Lucky Lilly. Yes, lucky for the other fellow, but never for myself. As long as it was some one else's dough I was playing around with, I could hit it right on the nose, but let me try to catch a bet on the side for Little Lilly and my horse either would be scratched at the post, would unseat his rider, or come in dead last. And if that doesn't make sense, then you just don't know your ponies.

That's the way things are around the tracks; luck, superstition and crazy hunches. Take, for instance, the guy who'll never bet on a horse unless there's a C in his name, or the tout who steers the suckers around number seven, and the bookie who'll never take a two dollar bill.

But I didn't play them that way. What I had was an uncanny horse sense. By that I don't mean any special knowledge of form or past performance and I never paid any attention to dope sheets or the wise money boys, nor did I bet on the best horse. It was just a *feel* I had for what went on behind the paddock fence. That was where I spent my time between races. My form chart was the set of a jockey's shoulders, the gleam in his eye before a race—you might almost call it a certain aura that hovered around a certain horse. Don't ask me to explain it. I can't, least of all to myself. I just knew, that's all. Knew, that is, unless it was a good thing for myself I was spotting, then it was as I said: The jinx rode the saddle.

That was why I had to keep my job with the West Coast Escort Club. I needed the money. Don't get this club mixed up with a camouflaged house of call. It wasn't anything like that, and let the girl or her client try anything shady and they were scratched from the list. The club had so many rules they read like the regulations for a fashionable finishing school. We couldn't accompany a man to his apartment or bring him to ours; we couldn't take more than three drinks in an evening; we couldn't remain with any man who was tight. Above all we mustn't take our clients into places that might for any reason be raided. In other words we girls had to watch our steps. But the job was so profitable and so terribly hard to get that once a girl landed she did her best to hang on.

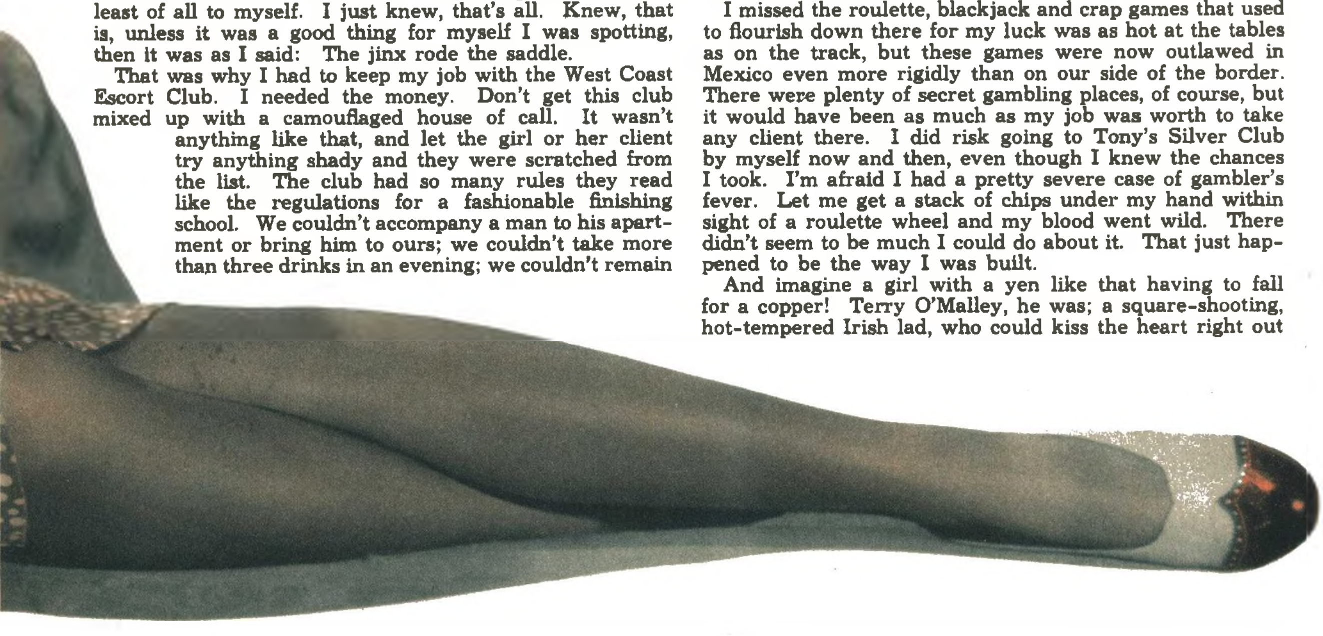
We had to go through rigid investigation as to morals and health, so that a man could be pretty sure if a Club employe was his lady for the evening he'd run no risk of blackmail or getting into a jam. That's why the fees were steep and the girl's cut was generous.

I was one of six girls assigned to the race tracks, and of the six, I was most in demand. Lucky Lilly got to be a sort of Club institution, and during the racing season I often was booked weeks in advance. My territory took in Santa Anita, Del Mar and Caliente. It was the Caliente track just across the Mexican border that was my favorite stamping ground. There was a certain tingle of mystery and adventure—even of danger—down there that I didn't feel anywhere else.

When Mexico lifted the ban on racing and the Turf Club reopened the track I hooted with delight. It was to run four days a week all Summer and Fall, on the days when Del Mar was closed. That would give me seven whole days a week, taking in both tracks, of the sport I loved.

I missed the roulette, blackjack and crap games that used to flourish down there for my luck was as hot at the tables as on the track, but these games were now outlawed in Mexico even more rigidly than on our side of the border. There were plenty of secret gambling places, of course, but it would have been as much as my job was worth to take any client there. I did risk going to Tony's Silver Club by myself now and then, even though I knew the chances I took. I'm afraid I had a pretty severe case of gambler's fever. Let me get a stack of chips under my hand within sight of a roulette wheel and my blood went wild. There didn't seem to be much I could do about it. That just happened to be the way I was built.

And imagine a girl with a yen like that having to fall for a copper! Terry O'Malley, he was; a square-shooting, hot-tempered Irish lad, who could kiss the heart right out



of my body. Terry wasn't just a flatfoot. He was ace scout for the vice squad and long since had discarded his uniform. It wouldn't have been so tough for me if he'd been one of those easy going coppers who had a bit of eye-trouble now and then, but Terry fairly leaned over backward he was so straight, and the keen Irish eye of him never missed a shady trick.

HE HATED my job for the Escort Club like poison, and was only waiting until I got good and sick of it before he set me up as Mrs. O'Malley. But I was far from ready yet to walk Terry's chalk line or to bring up a brood of little O'Malleys. Someday, perhaps, for I really was terribly in love with Terry. Often I'd long so much to be back in his arms that I couldn't stand going out with any other man even when it was strictly business.

"Damned sissies," Terry would explode. "Imagine a regular he-man letting some other guy pick him a girl."

"They can't all have your six feet two of irresistible charm," I chuckled, "or your red gold curls and bright Irish smile." All I had to do was mention Terry's curls to deflate his ego. He was terribly ashamed of them and did everything he could to subdue their flaming splendor.

"Temperament, Terry," I'd tease, "that's what it is. And I hope all the little O'Malleys look just like you, especially if they're girls." And that would always silence him.

My own hair was black as an Indian's and I wore it in a thick, loose bob. My eyes were black, too, and when I got excited Terry said there seemed to be strange purple lights burning in them. My body was strong and slender and I never seemed to get tired. I could ride horse-back all morning, stay at the track all afternoon, dance all evening and then hate to go home at night.

"I never saw the beat of you," Terry declared, "but you ought to be putting all that fire to a darned sight better use."

"Like keeping house for some hard-living, hungry Irish lad," I grinned, "and bringing up his thirteen kids."

"Just that, my darlin'," and he swept me fiercely into his big, strong arms.

My assignment that day was to call for one Lester Bemont at a hotel on Fifth

"BE a good kid," Mack entreated. "Slip in a ticket on this race for me. Here's the two bucks, Lil. Let's see you make it grow!"

"NOTHING doing," I grinned. "You know I never buy more than one ticket on a horse and I never give tips! Whenever I do it brings me bad luck!"

Avenue. I arrived early in my own roadster and a new white sports dress. I was feeling lucky, elated, and eager to see my companion for the day. He was a slight, fair-haired chap about twenty-two or three, with an air of not knowing quite what it was all about. Terry could have picked him up with one hand and spun him around like a top. And that, I knew, was just what he wanted to do when I saw him glaring down at us from the grandstand.

I wondered what Terry was doing at the races. That wasn't usually the way he spent his day off. And it wasn't likely that he'd come across the border on business. American cops weren't particularly welcome right now in Mexico. So it must be that he was there just to watch me. That didn't set so good and seemed to put seven devils in my blood. If he really wanted to see something hot—all right I'd show him! For this, I knew, was going to be one of my days. Terry didn't even approve of betting on the races.

"Just watch my smoke, Terry, Darling," my eyes challenged, and I knew they must have been flashing with those purple lights he talked about.

I had rented a bungalow for the season in Chula Vista to be near the tracks, and I knew I'd be seeing Terry there after the last race. My assignment that day was only for the afternoon. I didn't have to spend the evening with Lester Bemont or drive him back to San Diego. He had taken a room for the week-end at the newly re-opened Caliente Hotel. Of course we could spend the evening together if we wanted to, and if I watched my step, but I was pretty sure Terry would look after that.

I liked betting in the books rather than the machines, and I had my favorite bookie. His name was Mack, the big red-faced chap in the booth nearest the grandstand. You wouldn't have thought he could grin when he saw me coming—his club had lost so much money on my hunches—but he sort of figured that in spite of the money they had handed me out the back window, I still had brought him luck. The bookies place their own secret bets with other clubs, you see, and Mack confessed I'd tipped him off to many a good thing that he'd cashed in on when the bosses weren't looking.

Mack knew of my job with the [*Please turn to page* 66]

SIX years ago I was nineteen-year-old Carola Rand with dreams and a driving ambition. Today I am . . . well, let's start from the beginning.

I came from a doubtful section of a little California town. The sort of section known as "across the tracks." You probably had one in your town. Sometimes it's called Shanty Town; sometimes it's called the Hollow, but it usually has the same characteristics no matter what it's called. The men sit out on the front porches in their undershirts and socks and poverty is the only condition the inhabitants have ever known.

It seemed like our family never had quite enough to eat. My mother took in washing to eke out my father's meager earnings and if I had any new clothes they were picked up in bargain basements. I went to school and was miserably unhappy. I didn't like the boys and girls from my own neighborhood and the other kind wouldn't have anything to do with the "kids from across the tracks"—except the boys, who never offered to take me to any of the football games or school affairs, but who did everything in their power to make the sort of furtive dates that, even as a kid entering my teens, I knew can bring only misery in the long run.

I didn't want those kind of dates. I didn't want anything they had to offer. Fiercely, yearningly, stubbornly, I wanted to be somebody. I knew that somewhere there was a different sort of world and I had made up my mind that someday I would reach it!

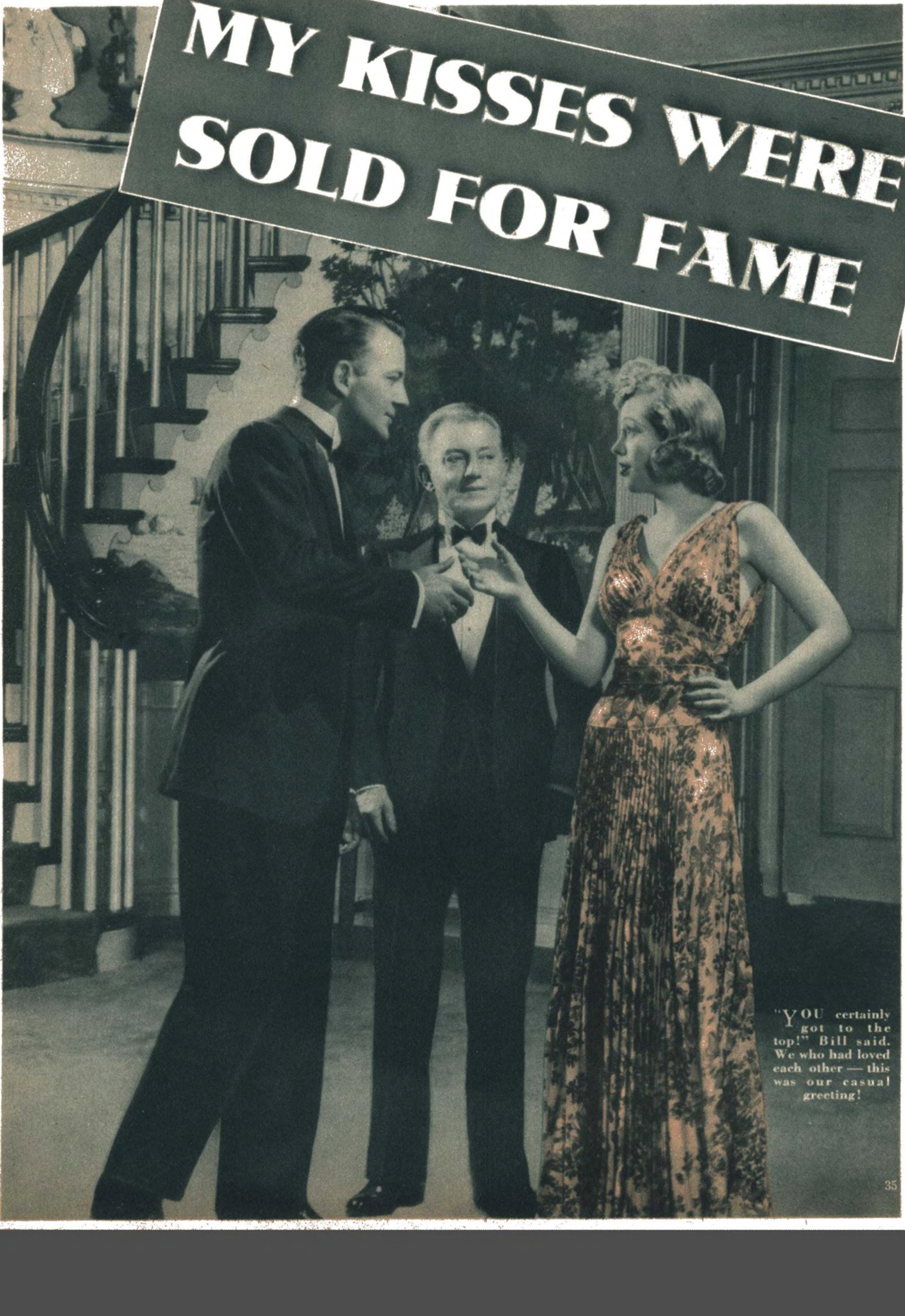
I didn't know how or when. I only knew that I would.

In the meantime I spent most of my time at the airport. My father had been a mechanic over there when I was a little girl and sometimes he had taken me with him and let me play in the sand piles behind the hangars when my mother had been too busy to bother with me at home. One time I had seen a famous woman-flier land her plane there and the way the men had all rushed to do her bidding had made an impression upon me. She had seemed so poised, so sure of herself that I had never forgotten her. I made up my mind that someday I would fly, too. Then people would notice me and jump to serve me.

And as I grew older the idea persisted. Machinery had a strange, unfeminine fascination for me and flying seemed to me to be the most wonderful thing in the world. I would stand for hours and watch the mechanics take an engine to pieces and there was nothing in life as beautiful to me as the flight of a plane.

She was that girl from the wrong side of the tracks but with a driving ambition to be a flyer! Her flights made headlines; she was world-famous. But can a woman substitute fame for the strong, comforting arms of her man?

MY KISSES WERE SOLD FOR FAME



"YOU certainly got to the top!" Bill said. We who had loved each other — this was our casual greeting!

I wasn't a woman in the air but an automaton but on the ground I was just a girl who had fallen for Bill's charm. It was love; breath-taking in its sweetness.

One day as I leaned against a hangar door and watched a delicate operation being performed on the insides of an old Lockheed Vega, a man came across the field with a swinging gait and pausing beside me regarded me curiously.

I looked at him out from under my long lashes. Of course I knew who he was. Everybody knew Bill Maylor and half the girls of Westfield practically swooned at his approach.

He was a test pilot now at the Westfield Airport but, during the war, he had been a lieutenant in the Air Corps. He was about thirty-three at that time. Just old enough cynical enough and aloof enough to be interesting. No wonder the girls in Westfield were crazy about him. They liked his six feet of lean hardness, his saturnine expression with the sudden flashing, crooked smile, the danger signals in the cool regard of his grey eyes and his utter obliviousness to their adoration. Oh, he was a fascinating creature, this Lieutenant William Maylor and now he regarded me speculatively.

"Got a sweetheart over here, kid?" he asked.

I shook my head scornfully.

His grey eyes swept over me. "I guess there's a lot of the boys over here who would like to be," he observed.

"I've taught them to mind their own business," I told him curtly. "They've learned that I come over here to watch 'em fly and not to get kissed behind the hangars."

I could have cited him some pretty good instances of times when my "across the tracks" training had taught the grinning pilots, the greasy young mechanics and the officers who worked in the big center building that when I said "Hands off," I really meant hands off! A lot of them had profited by scratched faces and none-too-gentle slaps and had discovered ruefully that I was much stronger than I looked.

"What do you come over here for, then?" Bill Maylor asked me with careless insolence. "Most of the girls from town come to the airport to flirt or get a free ride or pick up a date. You certainly don't come over just to watch the planes!"

"I certainly do!" I flared. "I like to see the planes take off and arrive. I like to watch 'em work on them. I don't give a darn for any man at this field. They've got the same idea you have. They think a girl comes over here to be pawed or dated. Well, I don't! It's the aeroplanes I'm interested in—not the guys that fly them. You can pick their kind up, a dime a dozen anywhere!"

"So?" he drawled. There was a faint trace of mockery and skepticism in that monosyllable.

"Yes, that's so!" I snapped. "And if you don't believe me—ask a few of 'em. Some day I'm going to know how to fly myself. I'm going to go places and do things, but, in the meantime, I'm not letting a lot of half-baked pilots paw all over me just to pay for learning to fly. I'll learn by myself first!"

Lieutenant William Maylor threw back his handsome head and laughed, his even white teeth gleaming in the bronzed perfection of his skin.

"Well, I'll say one thing for you," he commented, appreciatively, "you know all the answers."

"You've got to know the answers if you intend to get any place in the world," I told him, wisely.

"You've been reading books!" he grinned.

I didn't answer him. Maybe the girls *did* go crazy about him, but I had something else to do besides furnish amusement for Lieutenant William Maylor. I turned away from the hangars and started back toward town.

"Hey, wait a minute," he called after me. "The boys will have this crate ready in a minute and I'll fly you around the field in it."

"Honestly!" I stopped in my tracks and looked at him wide-eyed.

To actually go up in the air was one of my most ardent desires.

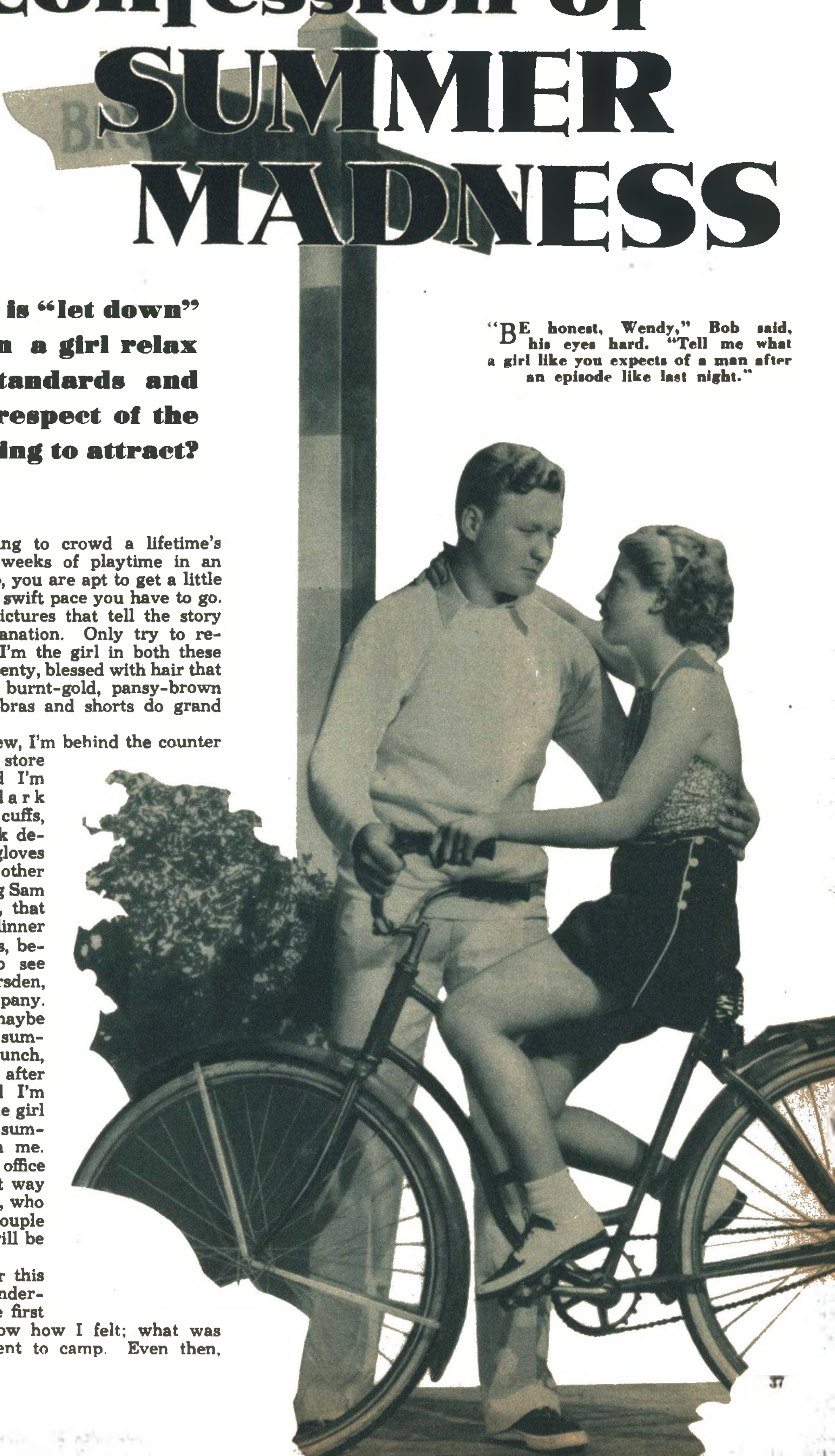
"Honestly!" he echoed. "Come on and sit down and talk until they get the thing tightened up."

He sat down on the edge of a

[*Please turn to page 82*]

My Confession of SUMMER MADNESS

Vacation time is "let down" time. But can a girl relax her moral standards and still hold the respect of the man she's trying to attract?



"BE honest, Wendy," Bob said, his eyes hard. "Tell me what a girl like you expects of a man after an episode like last night."

WHEN you are trying to crowd a lifetime's glamour into two weeks of playtime in an adult summer camp, you are apt to get a little "high" and heady with the swift pace you have to go.

Let me give you two pictures that tell the story better than pages of explanation. Only try to remember, if you can, that I'm the girl in both these pictures, I, Wendy Janis, twenty, blessed with hair that Bob, that summer, called burnt-gold, pansy-brown eyes and a figure that a bras and shorts do grand things for.

But in this bird's-eye view, I'm behind the counter in the largest department store in Detroit, Michigan, and I'm wearing the regulation dark dress and snowy collar and cuffs, with my hair brushed back demurely, as I sell bags and gloves and veils and belts and other accessories. And I'm telling Sam Hackson, the floor-walker, that I can't have a chow-mein dinner with him at San Lan Cho's, because I've got a date to see "Camille" with Benny Marsden, accountant at Coomb Company.

And I'm thinking that maybe I can get in an hour on my summer camp outfit if I cut lunch, since Benny will feed me after the movie anyway. And I'm thinking of Hope Harris, the girl who is going to share this summer camp adventure with me. Hope works in a doctor's office and is much too much that way about the handsome doctor, who happens to be married. A couple of weeks away from him will be good for her.

I have glorious plans for this summer camp spree. To understand the girl I was in the first picture, you've got to know how I felt; what was in my mind when we went to camp. Even then, you'll wonder, perhaps, at how utterly I lost my head.

I had pretty definite ideas of what I wanted of life. Maybe they were a result of my restless dissatisfaction with the way things were for me then. I was deadly tired of Sam and Benny and the others. Maybe I saw too many movies; expected too much of these boys I dated. Most of them were decent enough chaps, not very eloquent maybe—they couldn't say things the way Robert Taylor and Errol Flynn do, and their love-making was certainly cruder—but they were honest. If it was marriage they wanted, you knew it. And if it was something else again, you knew that too. You knew where you stood and whatever you did was your own lookout.

What was I hungry for? What any twenty-year-old girl is hungry for. Fun, color, romance, *love!*

And now the other picture. Something has gone before it. Seven marvelous days and nights at Camp Wakerobin in Northern Wisconsin. A dozen or more little rustic cabins set among the pines on Blue Cloud lake, and grouped around a modernly rustic hotel where we had our meals and danced at night when we weren't on a party in one of the cabins. Men and girls out for a good time, jolly and friendly; a comraderie that admitted no strangeness, a breathless hurry to crowd everything into these glorious days.

You couldn't wait for things to take their regular course when it was costing you three dollars a day, and in a week you'd be back at the grind—glamour, opportunity, adventure, just tantalizing memories. You had to open your arms to whatever offered! And that's what we did. Yes, even Hope, and I was glad she was forgetting her married doctor.

SEVEN days and nights of swimming, hiking, fishing, dancing, playing, partying; feeling like someone in a dream; feeling as lovely and desirable and glamorous as any heroine in the many movies we'd seen! Living in swim suits and bras and shorts and slacks and sport clothes and lovely, lovely long summer evening gowns! All the things we'd always wanted to wear and never got a chance to in the city. All the things we'd gone without lunches for; skimped our winter wardrobe for; darned and patched and mended for; we could wear now!

Seven days and seven nights. It was all sheer wonder. Seven nights? Seven breathless heart-beats! Bob was the miracle. Bob Larken, reporter on the *Detroit Chronicle* back home, whom I had traveled five hundred miles to find! Seven days and nights of loving Bob until I was dizzy with it, caught up, changed, transformed. And this was the seventh night, and here I was in Bob's arms on the lakeshore, with the summer moon bathing us in glory like two lovers in a dream; Bob's dark, ardent face bent over mine, his lips and his arms and his eyes pleading, asking; demanding a surrender I was too frightened to give, in spite of my romance-hungry heart.

"Wendy darling, you're so darned sweet! You know what you do to me, don't you? You know I want you! Oh, Wendy, loveliest, I love you so much!"

Beautiful words, weren't they? The men I dated throughout the year wouldn't have known how to say anything so sweet. Bob laughed a little awkwardly, tilted my face up with his slender brown fingers. And ecstasy spilled through me till I was weak with it.

"Don't think I'm always like this, Wendy, sweet! I'm a newspaper man; a tough guy, a hard boiled egg! Slinging words is my game. But somehow, dear," the harshness went out of his voice, and it became so throbbingly tender that all my senses quivered, "I want to use all the special words in the English language for you! You're so lovable, Wendy, made for loving, my loving—"

"You mean it, Bob?" I asked huskily. "This isn't just something I'm dreaming? Because—well, I couldn't quite bear that . . ."

I had never seen a man's mouth go so tender. I clung to him blindly as he took my lips, and happiness washed over me in great waves of flame.

"Bob, darling—"

He smothered the words with his kisses, blotted out all thoughts with the unbearable thrill of his nearness; his lean hard body pressed to mine, welded to it until I felt that we had been a part of each other forever and had come together after a long, long separation. He said again, brokenly against my mouth.

"You know I want you, Wendy."

"I—I know, Bob. I want you, too! I love you so!"

And he laughed and caught me up in his arms, wrapping my long velvet cape that he had had over his arm around me.

"You mean that, Wendy? You know that tonight isn't real, that we're not real, that tomorrow—"

"I mean it!" I seemed to hear only his first question. Did I mean it? I buried my face with almost a sob, against the hard thud of his heart. "It's real!" I cried passionately. "I've never lived till now."

DREAMILY I knew that he walked with me in his arms, till the pines closed around us like a dark fragrant wall. He steadied me on my feet, and I felt the springiness of pine-needles under my sandals and saw the moon filtering through the pine branches, and Bob spreading the velvet cape.

For a tiny moment, I saw the nights I had sat in the crowded one-room apartment I shared with Hope, putting excited stitches into that cape, thanking my stars for a night-school course in sewing! I thought dazedly, exultantly, feeling the softness of the velvet under me now, "I was making it for this!"

Bob was the tenderest lover a girl ever had. His love was a white, demanding flame that consumed me.

Afterward, it was so calm and lovely; I felt so quiet and relaxed and at peace, that I didn't want to talk, and so wasn't surprised, at first, at Bob's quietness; his white face and burning eyes. When you've been through an experience like the one we'd just shared, words seemed awfully little and useless—not even necessary.

But walking back from a rendezvous is different from being carried in a lover's arms. You have too much time to think. And I was thinking of all the times I had refused men like Sam and Benny and others the thing I had given Bob with such glorious abandonment tonight! At the edge of the pines, I put my hand on his arm.

"Tell me—just once more—that you love me! Don't think I'm silly. But I'll—I'll sleep better tonight if I hear you say it."

Bob squared his broad shoulders, became the boy I had played with and swam with and hiked with and fished with for seven carefree days. Not the lover who had pleaded with his kisses for the nights of the week, and had at last won me on the seventh. He said lightly:

"In words of one syllable, is that it, Wendy? I love you, darling. Now go to sleep on it, like a good girl, and I'll see you for an early swim."

It was the daytime Bob I adored, of course, but somehow it wasn't what I wanted, not for the finale of tonight's glory.

Our cottage was dark, so I slipped in quietly, turning on one soft light in my tiny bedroom. It took me a long time to undress, for every once in awhile, I'd find myself staring into space; motionless, dazed with memory of the past incredible hour. It didn't seem quite possible that that girl in the mirror, with her cloud of soft bright hair around her bare shoulders and her eyes looking enormous and luminous in her white face, could really be Wendy Janis, clerk in a department store. Now I was a girl in love, who had given her love triumphantly and

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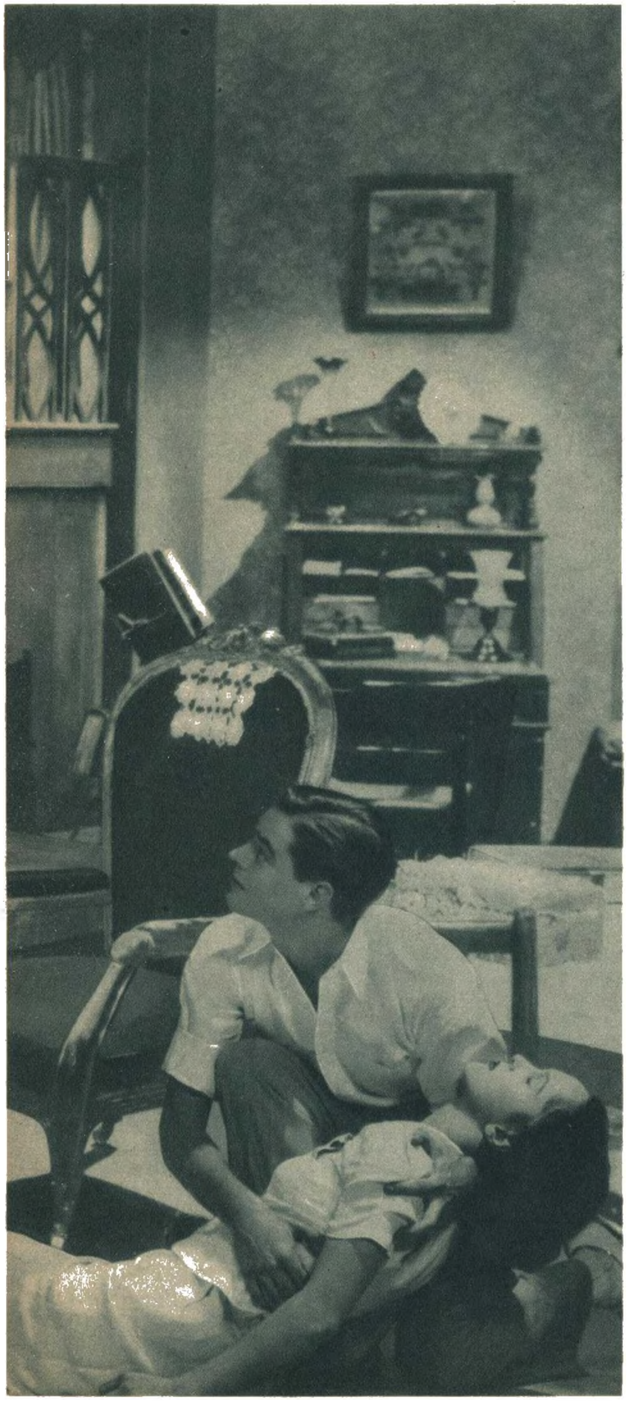

"DO something!" Bill shouted frantically at Cory. "You're a doctor. "If you let her die, I'll finish what I started—"

Ours Was a COCKTAIL MARRIAGE

I'LL always believe Fate had something to do with Dotty Barker getting those two tickets for the University-Rawlings game and not being able to use them. Her brother was one of Rawlings' assistant coaches and had sent them to her just when she was cramming for a special exam.

In the first place, for months I'd had a "picture crush" on Dig Anderson, Rawlings' famous quarter. My room at Miss Tripp's Chicago school for girls was plastered with them, and I'd always wanted to see him in action. In the second place, I'd been good long enough. I was bored to death and ripe for most any kind of a crazy lark.

It took about half an hour, and a hand-knitted sweater, to wheedle the tickets out of Dot, and bribe her to silence. And less than five minutes and no sweater at all, to cook it up with Pet Stuyvesant, my room-mate, who was two years older than I, and as wild as they come.

Between us we faked an invitation from my stepfather for a week-end at his cottage in the Dunes, and copied his name from the signature on my once-a-month check, and took it down to Miss Tripp. Miss Tripp thought she was smart, but we girls could put anything over on her. All we had to do was to curtsy and give her a baby stare, and talk as though butter wouldn't melt in our mouths. She would have lost her mind if she'd known half that went on behind the scenes in the Select Boarding School for Young Ladies she ran!

"Certainly, Lynn," she cooed. "I think it's very sweet in your father to offer you and Pet this lovely week-end. Give dear Mr. Leeds my kindest regards and have a good time." She drove us to the train herself.

All the way in to Rawlings we giggled, Pet and I. Not about the way we had fooled Miss Tripp—that had been so easy there hadn't been any kick to it at all—but about

College kids, sober, know that a wild football-party marriage hasn't a chance! Yet here are two who topped off a reckless night with a gin-soaked ceremony, forgetting that marriage vows are binding even if lightly taken.

other things: Such as how we were going to manage two days and a night in a crowded college town, with only two dollars and fifty cents over our railroad fare between us; and just how we were going about it to crash a good dinner-dance after the game, without a date, nor the promise of one, ahead of us.

Pet had ditched school for week-end parties before, often. But they'd always been planned parties—a place to go and dates waiting. And pretty wild dates, if you believed the tales she told. This was the first time she'd ever gone anywhere on the loose, and in spite of her giggling she was worried. I was too green to worry. And too excited. My first adventure—my first chance to see Dig Anderson play!

"Oh, shut up," I said at last, "and relax. Something will happen—it always does. I'm going to have a good time, and I don't want to spoil it by worrying."

I WAS seventeen years old, and I couldn't remember when I hadn't taken things pretty much for granted. Having money or not having it; being in good schools such as Miss Tripp's, and in poor ones, the names of which I'd almost forgotten. Mother had been married three times and divorced two. She probably would have been divorced again, if she hadn't been killed. I was fifteen when that happened—an automobile accident with the man who was due to be husband number four had she lived.

Jonas Leeds, my stepfather, was a lot more decent about it than lots of men would have been under the circumstances, but he hadn't minced matters a bit:

"You are another man's child, Lynn. Your mother hadn't a cent of her own and she was untrue to me in every sense of the word, yet I feel a certain moral responsibility to you that I'm recognizing.

"Until you are twenty-one—or married, your school and clothing allowance will be paid you by monthly checks. After that, you'll be on your own. We'll say goodby now, if you please. You are too much like your mother in appearance and characteristics for me ever to want to see you again."

Cold-blooded? Brutal? Sure. But I didn't blame him. I really hadn't loved my mother. I'd hardly known her, she had kept me away from her so carefully. I grew too fast, and dated her too plainly. I certainly hadn't respected her! I'd heard too much back-door gossip—servant's talk—that hadn't been meant for my ears.

In fact I'd learned not to respect much of anything but my own quick wits and what they could get me. Just now they were set on getting a good time.

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"DUKE," Dig lashed out, "get these girls out of here! Someone's tipped off the Dean! They're sending a man to investigate." I was too dizzy to care what happened but Duke was scared stiff.

What My

THE world is a large place, but it isn't large enough in which to hide. Always, wherever I go, there will be someone who will know my story; who will whisper some garbled version into some avid, listening ear.

"Christine Lehigh—the Lehigh case, don't you remember? The papers were full of it a couple of years ago. An actress, on her way to the top, when it happened. Oh, it ruined her career—oh, my, yes! She never even tried to come back.

"After all—murder, you know. . . ."

It wasn't murder. And I've told the truth a good many times to a good many people. But I've never told the truth about Chrissie Lehigh. The whole truth from the beginning—Chrissie Lehigh, child, girl, woman.

I'd like to tell it. Perhaps after I'm finished, I may understand better why some things have to be as they are; seeing it all down before me in black and white—living it again.

There's an old saying: Like mother, like daughter. If that is true, it would mean that my mother's sin was so deep in my blood, that it would have marked me no matter where I had been reared.

But Hillsdale was such a small town! So small that a lost dog couldn't stay lost in it long enough to hide its bone. Not much of a chance for its only "love child" to forget the misfortune that had branded her.

Everyone in town knew me. Chrissie Lehigh, who clerked in Smith's General Store, and lived with her widowed grandmother in the mortgage-plastered, tumbledown Lehigh house on the outskirts of the village.

And they knew my mother's story; how she had jilted the boy who loved her, to run away with a stock company that had been playing Hillsdale, and how, the next thing that happened, she was having me—a fatherless baby, in a charity hospital. Granny had to go on to bring us both back to Hillsdale—only mother was dead.

And they knew, because secrets were few in Hillsdale, that it was John Wallis, the town's wealthiest man—but once the jilted boy who had loved mother—who had given Granny the money and who had kept on giving it to her, soothing her pride by taking mortgage after mortgage on the crazy old place that wasn't worth the lot that held it.

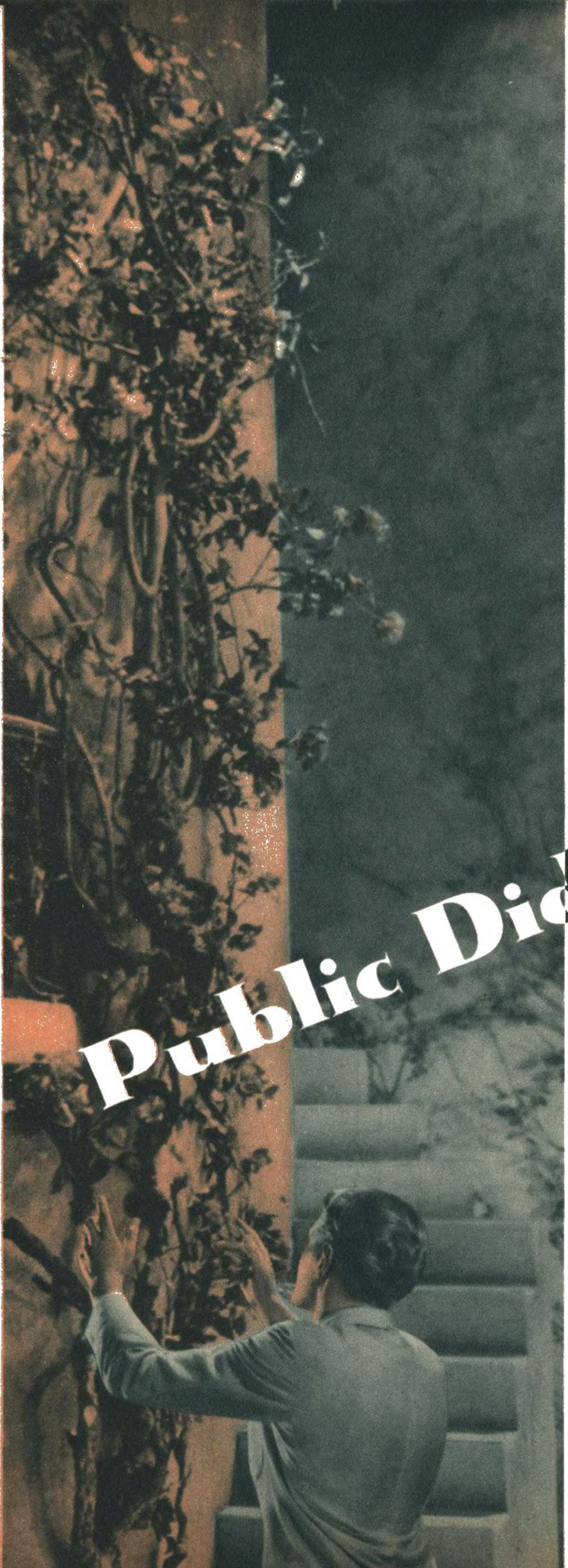
It hadn't taken me long, growing up in Hillsdale; going to its one public school, to learn all these things, too. Also the meaning of the word the big boys whispered at me, when I passed.

Those things leave their marks on a sensitive, growing child. They left deep marks on me. Long before I understood why, by instinct, I was avoiding children my own age, turning to books for company, and make-believe, and dreams.

And always, when things got too bad, there was John Wallis.

JOHN WALLIS was a strange man. He was large-boned and thin almost to gauntness, and although he wasn't old—twenty-four, when I was born Granny said—I can't remember him when he hadn't that same look of years in his bleak, unhappy eyes, and in the lines, deep as scars, that marked his fine-looking face from nostril to chin. He had never married.

They liked to say of him in Hillsdale, that because he had been so unlucky in love, he would always be lucky in money.



Public Didn't Know

A Famous Actress Reveals Her Love Tragedy

She struggled through the disillusion of broken dreams to rise to great heights—only to be torn down again by the ghosts of yesterday.

WE used to pose, Romeo and Juliet fashion in the moonlight before he came up. I knew I shouldn't let him—But I loved him! I loved him!

It seemed that way. Investments that had failed for other people profited for him. Waste land had brought him coal, and not four years after his father had died, an old farm that no one thought worth cultivating, had yielded one of the richest oil wells in the State.

John Wallis, and his sister Harriet, twelve years younger than he, who lived with him in the big Wallis house on Main Street, were probably the richest people in that part of the State.

No one liked Harriet. Hat, they called her—John Wallis' uppity sister, but they toadied to her, and she liked it. She ruled Hillsdale like a queen. With John, it was different. They liked him, but I expect I was the only person in Hillsdale who wasn't afraid of him. Even Harriet—and Granny stood in awe of him.

That was because I saw a side of him no one else ever saw. His hurt side. And he saw mine. That thing mother had done to us both, was always there, between us. A living bond.

Because Granny called him John, I called him John too, and when he came to see her, he would take me in his arms, and hold me there, his fingers soft on the dark tangle of my curls.

One of my first memories was of his holding me like that, while he whispered, soft against my cheek, "Chrissie . . . Chrissie . . . Chrissie," in a voice that was like a prayer.

Christine had been my mother's name. He had been the one to give it to me—not Granny.

Poor old Granny didn't give me much of anything but the care I needed. She hadn't much left in her to give. I never took my troubles to her—I took them to John. The snubs, the whispers I was beginning to understand, the hurts.

"The world's ugly . . . It's full of ugly things. I hate it! I wish I were dead!" I'd sobbed. He hadn't tried to sympathize or explain. He had simply answered in quiet understanding:

"Do what I've tried to do, child. Make your own world, and live in it. No one can hurt you there." He gave me books to read—dozens of them, until they filled the home-made shelves that lined my room. I found in them the world he had promised me—a world of great joys, great sorrows, of great adventures and great loves. It was the love parts I liked best.

I liked to dramatize them; to put myself in place of the heroines, speak their words, love with them, suffer with them, behind the door of my tiny room.

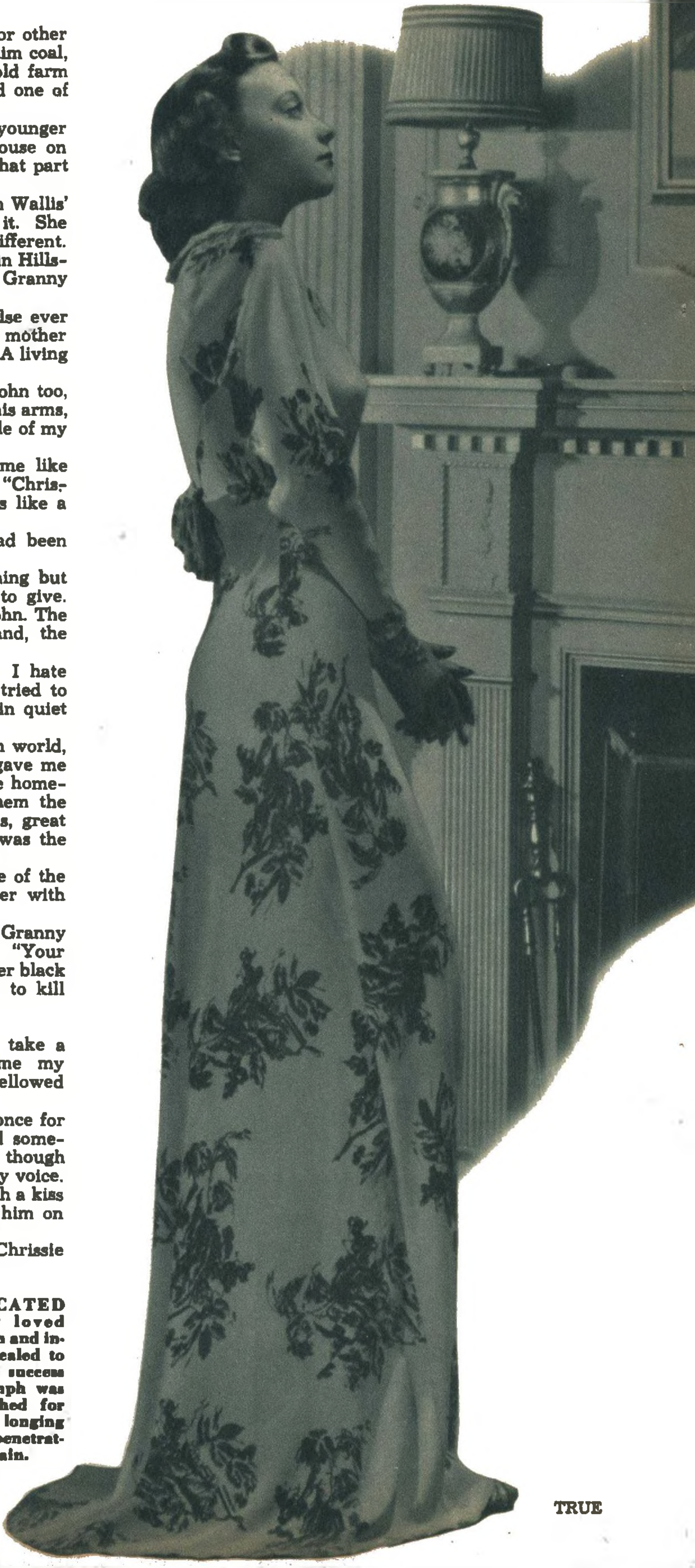
I soon learned to lock my door, for nothing made Granny more furious than when she caught me acting. "Your mother's name—her looks . . . her red mouth and her black hair, and her eyes—and now this! Do you want to kill me?"

WHEN I was sixteen and left high school to take a job in Smith's store, John Wallis gave me my graduating dress, and a ring in a box lined with yellowed satin.

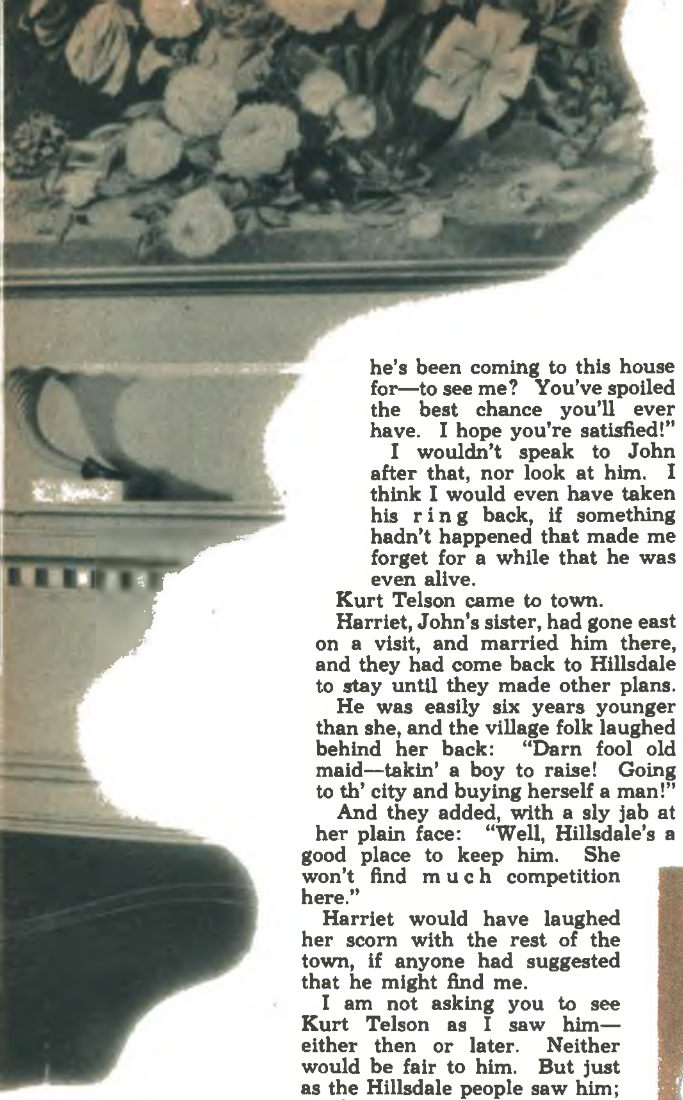
He didn't say so, but I knew it had been meant once for my mother. Her engagement ring, maybe. It did something to me, sent chills trickling down my spine. As though mother were inside me trying to talk to John with my voice. I threw my arms around his neck and kissed him with a kiss that wasn't a girl's at all—but a woman's—kissed him on the mouth.

Granny quavered a shocked: "For shame! Chrissie Lehigh!" but John didn't say a word. He just loosened my arms from his neck, and swung from the room. His face was paper-white and his eyes were wide-staring as though he had seen a ghost.

He never came to the house again when I was there. Granny said it was because I'd been so forward. She said something else, too, that made me sick with rage. "John Wallis loves you. What do you think



SOPHISTICATED Broadway loved me! My youth and innocence appealed to it. I was a success yet my triumph was bitter. I ached for John with a longing that was as penetrating as pain.



he's been coming to this house for—to see me? You've spoiled the best chance you'll ever have. I hope you're satisfied!"

I wouldn't speak to John after that, nor look at him. I think I would even have taken his ring back, if something hadn't happened that made me forget for a while that he was even alive.

Kurt Telson came to town.

Harriet, John's sister, had gone east on a visit, and married him there, and they had come back to Hillsdale to stay until they made other plans.

He was easily six years younger than she, and the village folk laughed behind her back: "Darn fool old maid—takin' a boy to raise! Going to th' city and buying herself a man!"

And they added, with a sly jab at her plain face: "Well, Hillsdale's a good place to keep him. She won't find much competition here."

Harriet would have laughed her scorn with the rest of the town, if anyone had suggested that he might find me.

I am not asking you to see Kurt Telson as I saw him—either then or later. Neither would be fair to him. But just as the Hillsdale people saw him; a tall, fair young man with full lips that smiled easily, and pleasant, friendly ways. And they said of him, their leniency tinged with mild contempt: "Either almighty wise, or almighty dumb—or just plain lazy. Anyway he's found himself a butter tub, and's sitting in it. If he wants to pay for his board and keep, runnin' Hat's errands and taking her bossing that's his business—not our'n. . . ."

They accepted him a lot quicker and their criticisms of him were much more kindly, because they felt—just a little sorry for him.

There was neither criticism nor pity in the feeling I had for Kurt Telson. It would have been better for me if there had been. As for falling in love with him—my whole life seemed to be so built on love, molded by it. I had loved with so many book heroines, and suffered with them! And always there had been mother's tragic love for the unknown man who had fathered me, and John's tragic love for her.

The word *love* was as much a part of me as the air I breathed, but until I saw Kurt Telson, it had been just a word. A word about which stories were written and plays built. But after that first day when he came into Smith's store, and glancing up across the counter, I saw him there, saying in that soft, pleasant voice of his: "I'm Kurt Telson, and my wife sent me down for a bolt of dark blue ribbon please. . . ." Well—After that love wasn't a word any more, a thing to be mooned over and dreamed about and imagined. It was a real, throbbing vital thing. Its name was—Kurt Telson. And it was to be lived!

It was as simple as that.

HE HAD to ask me twice for the ribbon before I really heard him. I gave him light blue instead of the dark blue he wanted. He laughed and leaning across the counter stared impudently into my eyes.

"That's the color, if you'll open them wider so I can see. The midnight sky with the stars shining through. . . . Come on now—Mr. Smith wouldn't want you to lose a sale." He held the samples I gave him up to match them, laughing at my crimson cheeks.

I think he saw, even then, what was in those eyes of mine, for his smooth cheeks flushed a little, and he stood there talking to me much longer than there was any need.

After that he was always dropping in to the store to laugh and fool, and buy some silly thing he didn't want, and to whisper across the counter little flatteries—light, foolish things that sent my heart to thumping and the blood in a crimson flood over my throat and cheeks; that fanned, to a brighter glow, the candles that smouldered behind my darkening eyes.

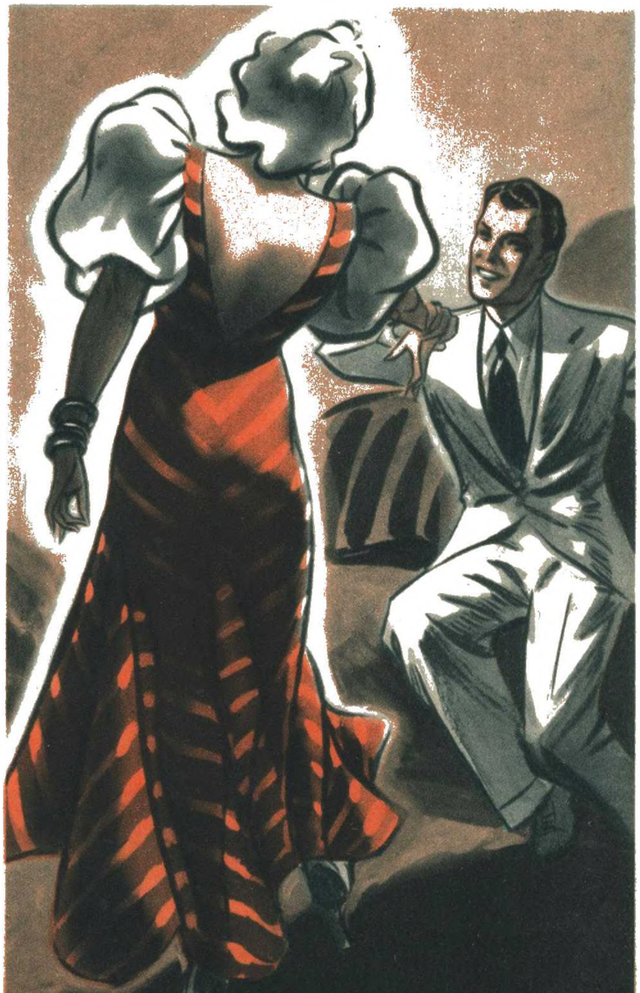
"Shouldn't look at a guy that way," he'd warn me, mockingly serious, "might give him ideas, you know. And ideas —in a town like Hillsdale—"

Oh, it was a game with him there at first—a game he would have played with any pretty girl, to ease his boredom. But it wasn't a game with me!

He never said a word to me I didn't treasure. I never spent a moment with him that I didn't live it over and over again, with my head buried in the pillows of my bed.

The dreams I dreamed there grew more wonderful as the days passed—more daring. They mirrored themselves in my face, rounded my thin

[*Please turn to page* 57]



I WAS FAITHFUL

The story thus far:

I WAS sixteen when Miss North gave me a job in the Secretarial Service Bureau she ran, at eighteen dollars a week. My brother Will, who was fourteen months older than I, was earning twenty-five as mechanic in a garage and, between us, we kept up the home—cared for Mother and my sister Betty, who was fifteen. Father had died the month before I'd graduated from high school.

The second year, Miss North raised my salary to twenty-two fifty and Will was getting thirty-five. Then Mother died suddenly and Will stepped in front of an automobile and suffered a spinal injury that promised to keep him a chair-bound invalid for life.

Miss North began turning over a lot of extra work to me, on commission. I had a way of getting along with people—like grouchy old Senator Baylie. He was the head of a big law firm and very wealthy. He had a son who was in Europe and was forever getting into scrapes, but after reading his letters and his father's letters to him, I felt sorry for him.

It was during my third year with Miss North that I met Jim Warren. He was a representative for an oil company and earned a huge salary. He came to our office to have some work done. His wife was incurably insane and I'm certain I never had pitied anyone so much, except my brother, Will.

We had lunch together occasionally but I wouldn't acknowledge to myself that I loved him until that day we walked up to the Navy Pier to watch the lake boats

MY dinner partner didn't know me. He was watching my husband flirting with Polly. "Pity Baylie didn't marry that girl," he laughed. "They say his wife is some nobody whom he's ashamed to be seen with."

steaming by. Jim's hand held mine tight as he said, "If I could take you away on a boat like that and never come back again, it would be all I'd ever ask of life until I died. There isn't any use telling you I love you, Esther. You have known it, I imagine, for weeks."

We clung to each other and kissed and the tears ran down my cheeks like rain. I knew I should let him go, but I couldn't. Several weeks passed and I knew I couldn't fight my love any longer. I stopped fighting and gave myself to Jim as wholly and completely as any fool girl ever gave herself to the man she loved.

I was worried about Will. If he ever found out the truth about Jim and me, he would kill himself. He had said, "If I thought you and that Warren guy . . . And me a helpless good-for-nothing sitting here all day long, thinking, thinking . . . well, I'm telling you Esther, if anything like that happens to you, I'd kill myself."

It wasn't two weeks after this that Jim got word he was being transferred to China. He was utterly, wildly happy. "It's our out. Can't you see it? You'll be my wife. Let me go to Will and tell him. He'll understand." But I couldn't let him do that—I didn't want to go to China with him because he couldn't acknowledge me as his wife any more there than he could here. It would be the same back-street life—the same secrecy and hiding of our love, Jim had to go to New York immediately on business. When he returned, I was to be ready to go with him.

The day Jim left, I was called to Senator Baylie's office for dictation. I found

IN MY FASHION

If you discovered that your husband was fascinated by another woman—one perhaps who could further his political ambitions—would you give him up to her, or would you fight to hold him?

a man there, a stranger, but I knew it was his son Patrick. Later Pat came for the Senator's finished letters and asked me to go to lunch with him the following day. I had a grand time until he passed out. I tipped the waiter to take care of him and went back to my office.

I didn't see him again that afternoon and the next morning Jim came back. He saw the box of orchids on my desk that Pat had sent me in appreciation of my care of him when he was drunk. Jim flew into a rage. I told him I thought it wise for us to part. We couldn't go on.

"Give you up!" he cried wildly. "I'll kill you first. Kill myself." He was like a wild man. I promised to come to his apartment to talk it over, but he was called to Cleveland.

Pat came to my house that night for a visit. Will liked him a lot and they had a grand time together. When he was ready to leave, I walked to the gate with him.

"Esther," he said softly, "I don't know whether you realize it or not but something big has happened to me. I started to go out and get drunk, then I thought of you and I couldn't. Listen, I'm going to make a promise I've never made even to myself. So long as I live I'll never drink again. I'm tearing this old house of mine down and building it up again, on my faith—in you."

I ran back up the walk and left him standing there. I couldn't bear another word. But I knew I could not go to China with Jim.

When Jim returned, he called me. "We are taking the plane to New York tomorrow afternoon—you and I, Esther." And he hung up before I could say a word. The next afternoon, I sent a messenger to the field with a note for Jim, telling him I couldn't go.

I was still at my desk when I heard his footsteps in the hall. He was furious and pulled a gun on me. I screamed and that seemed to bring him to his senses, but it also brought Pat running.

"Pat," I begged, "please go away. Everything is all right!"

"All right, I'll go if you say so." His glance swept Jim, sharp with angry warning. "But I'm waiting down at the end of the corridor until I see this man leave."

I couldn't speak, my lips were trembling. At last Jim said: "So you've turned me down, have you? All right, but God help Pat Baylie. I'll get even with him for this if it's the last thing I ever do. And when that time comes, Esther, remember—I warned you."

PART II

Now go on with the story:

I DIDN'T even hear him leave the room. And I don't know how I got home. I must have done it by instinct, for I never have remembered a thing that happened from the time Jim left me until I was walking through our gate at home, and Betty was running to meet me.

It was that, that yanked me back to earth. Her running toward me with her white face and streaming hair, screaming my name and dragging at me with frantic hands. "It's Will!" she sobbed. "He's had a stroke . . . I—I got home about half an hour ago and found him on th' floor. He—he was saying something about your running away with Jim Warren—something about Jim's calling him and telling him—and now—he can't talk at all! And the doctor isn't here yet, and I can't move him . . . and . . . and . . . I'm nearly crazy . . . !"

All I could think of as I ran up the walk was: "Will's dying and I've killed him! I've killed Will!" And when I saw him lying there on the couch, his poor thin arms stretched out so helplessly beside him; the relief on his face when I knelt beside him and put my cheek against his, I wanted to die of pity and shame.

I couldn't even feel surprised when I looked up to quiet Betty and found Pat Baylie standing there beside us, his hat in his hand.

He never looked at me, just smiled down at Will and said, his voice so cheerfully casual it quieted us all as nothing else could have done: "Hello, old-timer! Good thing I took tonight to call, eh? How about my carrying you back into the bedroom, and getting your things off before th' doc comes?"

I knew what had happened all right. Pat had waited until I left the office and seeing the condition I was in, had come out on the same train with me, and I'd never noticed him. I suppose he'd been afraid I'd never get home alone.

It was a blessed thing for all of us that he'd come. Will was a big man and, even thin as he was, terribly heavy, but Pat lifted him like a child in his arms. He had him in bed and comfortable as he could make him, by the time the doctor's car came roaring up the street and grated to a stop at our door. But I knew by the look on his face, as he raised it to me across Will's so terribly quiet form, that there wasn't any hope. I'd never seen eyes so sad, nor so pitying and so kind.

It was while I was gone to let the doctor in that Will died. He died in Pat Baylie's arms.

The next day I took his picture down from the wall of my room and hid it. I never could make myself look at it again.

It was the afternoon of Will's funeral that I told Pat the truth about Will's death, and what had brought on the stroke that killed him. And about Jim and me. It wasn't easy to tell, but I had to I guess, or go mad.

I remember how warm it was, and how the leaves of the big maple that shaded our cottage hung wilted and still, and the buzz-buzz of the bees in a honeysuckle vine that rambled over the wooden swing on which we sat.

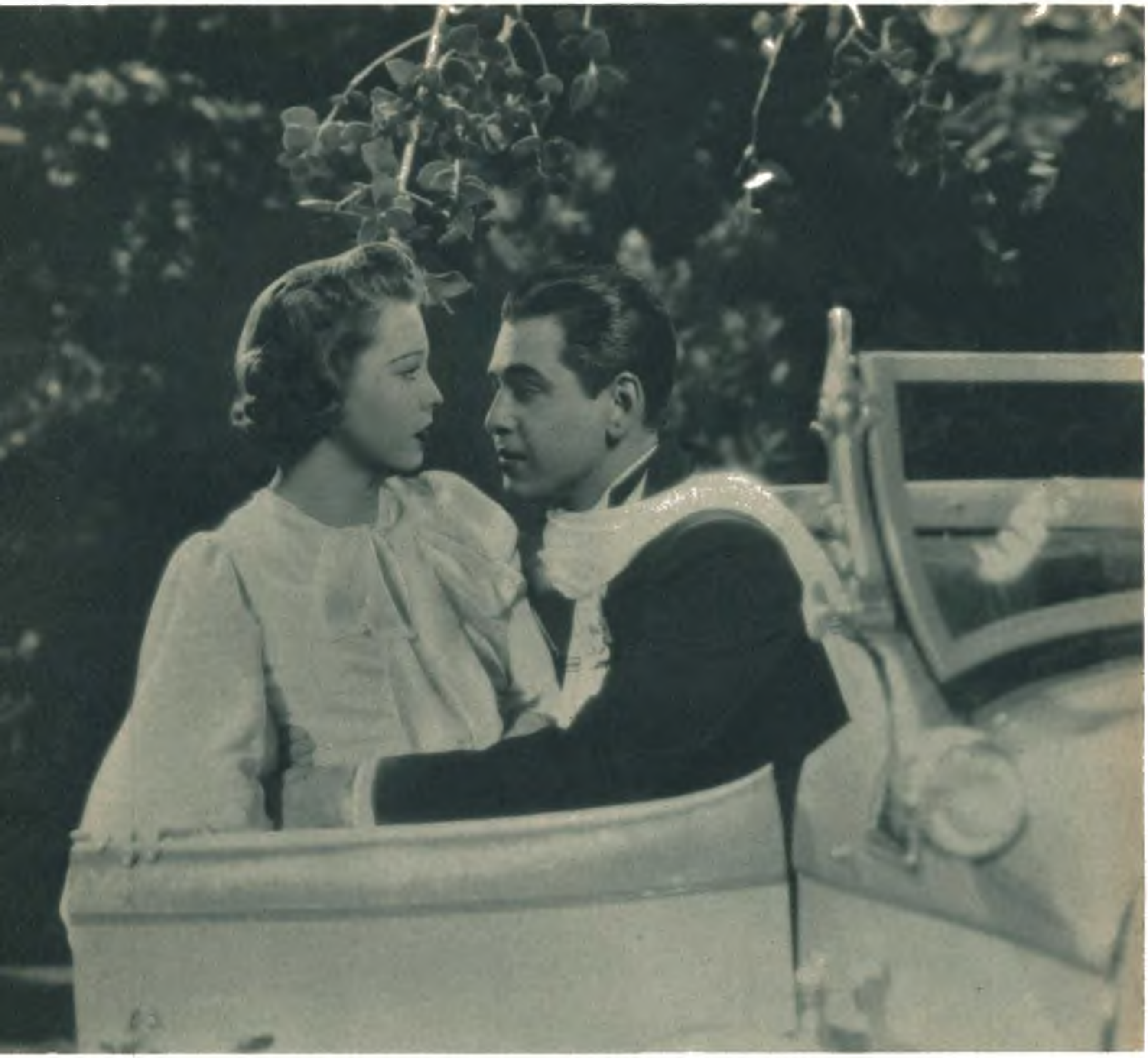
He heard me through without a word. After I had finished, I said in a voice flat with hopelessness: "It wasn't Jim's fault—I don't want you to blame him for it, Pat. He didn't know until he got to the airfield and found I wasn't there, that I really wasn't going with him. And—he'd wanted to tell Will all along. He thought it was right. I'm the one to blame. I've been the one to blame for everything from the start. It is a pretty terrible thing, knowing you've killed your own brother. I can't think what's going to become of me. I—I—can't think what—to do."

Pat didn't say a word for a while. He just put his arms around me and drew my head down against his shoulder and held it there. But after a little he began to talk. He talked for a long time in a voice as tender as a woman's and as soft with pity.

I can't remember all he told me—I doubt if I heard it, even then. And he didn't try to belittle my sin, or my share in Will's death. All he did was to try to help me bear it.

Before he left that night, I had promised to marry him.

"You've told me your story, Esther, and—you think you know mine. You don't. There's a lot that no one knows—least of all, Dad. And—I'm not going to tell you. I'm not



"ESTHER," Jim said huskily, "I hadn't meant to tell you but—my wife died four months ago. God—what a mess this world is." I couldn't speak. How different my life might have been had that come sooner!

even going to tell you I love you. I've been in love with too many girls to trust myself to say it, even to you—yet. But—I'm trying to do what I promised you I'd do, the other night. I'm trying to build my house over again, and—I need your help. I need you.

"Esther, I need you worse than Will needed you. I need you worse than Jim Warren needed you. And—you need me.

"Dear—will you marry me?"

A week before I would have thought myself crazy to have imagined there could be a place in my heart for anyone but Jim, but looking back now, I know that when I said "yes" to Pat that afternoon, it wasn't only his need of me and mine of him that made me say it. It was something that was calling from Pat's heart to mine; something that had drawn us together from the very first.

Next day Pat met me at the office and we walked over to the City Hall and got our license and were married. He gave me a huge bunch of violets and a friend of his—a man I'd never seen before—Earl Carter, a reporter, came with him as a witness.

I WANTED Pat to tell his father, beforehand, but he wouldn't. It didn't seem so important anyway—not enough to argue about. After all, Pat wasn't a child. And—neither was I.

After it was over we went straight out to the house. It was the sensible thing to do, as Betty would have to know anyway, and there were all our plans to make.

I'd expected her to be pretty angry at me—my marrying so soon after Will's death, but she wasn't. She was pleased instead, and awfully excited. Her sister had married a Baylie—the only son of Senator Baylie! She just sat and looked at us, her cheeks like roses and her eyes as big as saucers.

Pat laughed at her and called [*Please turn to page* 51]

THE MARRIAGE CLINIC

By
FRANCES
McDONALD

It Isn't Love

"PLEASE help me. I am desperate and something must be done. I am in my third year of college, secretly married to a girl I thought I loved, and also engaged to a girl I can never live without. When I am with my wife she makes me forget the girl I love at college. But when I go back to college, I realize that I cannot go on like this.

"My reason tells me my marriage was a ghastly mistake and that it should be ended. But my wife is such an affectionate type that I simply become wax in her hands. I seem to crave affection just as she does and when we are together I cannot describe the helplessness that seems to overwhelm me. I feel like another person. I feel as if we were born for each other. She talks about our future. She shows me her little bank book where she is saving her salary for things for our home when we can have one. She is such a trusting soul that I feel like a criminal. That makes me more affectionate than ever and then her happiness knows no bounds. And then we part and I go back to the other girl.

"It is harder to describe the other girl. She is cool, brilliant and sophisticated. She is a daughter of wealth; proud and dominating. Not domineering, just able to make everyone do what she wants done. I am her slave. Every one tells me that she has been engaged for two years, but she only laughs at that. She runs the whole college. What she says goes. And I am her chosen escort. She has not said that she loves me. In fact, she says love is for idiots like me. Nevertheless, I am her lover. And I dread the hour she learns I am not free.

"This girl has become an obsession with me. I am to visit her this summer at her home. I know I have no right to do this, but I cannot risk the loss of her interest, much less incur her anger. I have thought of telling my wife that I am going away to work, and then go to the other girl's home town for the summer. If I can then make sure of her love for me, perhaps it would give me the courage to write to my wife, tell her the entire truth and ask her to seek her freedom, and give me mine. I realize it is a coward's way to run away and then write of such a thing. But the minute I get back with my wife, everything else seems only a dream. But there is no future for me in settling down with the girl I married. Her idea of success is for both to work and save and maybe some day own a bungalow and have six kids.

"The other girl has a much broader view. Her world is the world I would love to inhabit. Her people have influence as well as wealth. Her life is exciting. She has been abroad, everywhere. She seems amused at everything—especially at love. Sometimes when my emotions overwhelm me, she begs me not to be so "elemental." When I ask her what she means she tells me that such things always affect her like watching some barbarian eat with his knife or use a toothpick. She says that she prefers intellect to primitive impulse. This leaves me bordering upon despair.

"She often avoids me for weeks, telling me our friendship is a futile experiment. Half the time I do not know what she means. But I am still her slave. I know that I would be unhappy as her husband. Something seems to tell me she would treat me like a dog. But right now I would rather be with her and ill-treated than with my wife and adored—which I know I would be. How can I tell a simple soul like my wife all these facts? I can't! But I must have my freedom. I must have my chance to win the one I cannot live without.

"I should mention that I was engaged four years to my wife before I met the real one meant for me, and married her, hoping to wipe out the stronger

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Specially posed by Betty Grable, Paramount Starlet

I Was Faithful In My Fashion

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 49]

her "Briar Rose." He kissed her and she kissed him back, and put her arm around his neck. I don't believe I'd ever realized before how lovely Betty was, and how much like a rose she really did look. I was glad she and Pat hit it off so well. It would make it nicer for us all.

That night we made our plans. We would stay on at the house until we could sell it and get an apartment down town, and Pat was all for having me give up the office right away. "Sit at home and sew a fine seam," he teased. But I couldn't see it that way, particularly when Pat didn't have a thing but the allowance his father gave him, and no job but the work he did in his father's office. Then, of course, there was Betty.

We finally decided that I'd break Betty in to take my place with Miss North. In fact, Miss North had suggested it a long time before, and Betty had been taking shorthand and typing ever since she'd started high. She could go down with me every day, and we'd get old Mrs. Green, who had done our scrub work for years, to take care of the house.

We all went down together the next morning, and Pat left us at his father's floor. I thought he seemed nervous, but he just laughed when I told him so.

I was sure he'd drop in to see me before noon, and when he didn't, I waited until Miss North had stepped out, and called his office.

"Mr. Patrick Baylie left sometime ago," the girl at the desk told me. "No, I don't know where he went. He left no word."

I'd hardly put the phone back in the cradle, before the Senator came banging in. It was the first time he'd ever come to me himself, and I knew before he opened his lips, that I was in for a scene. His eyes were squinted so close you could hardly see them. He was fiery red, clear up into his grey hair, and his neck veins were swollen out over his collar, as they always were when he was in one of his tantrums.

I caught at my desk with my hands and steadied myself for the roar I knew was coming.

It came all right. "A hell of a mess you've got yourself into now! You and this precious son of mine! Married! I want to know if that's true. I've come up her to find out. Answer me, girl! Are you and Pat married?"

"I'm afraid we are, Senator," I said as calmly as I could. And I was surprised at myself that I could be so little afraid. Almost I wanted to laugh. He looked so like an angry little rooster with red wattles and fiery comb.

"Afraid!" he caught at the word and gave it a meaning I hadn't intended. "You'd better be afraid, you damn' little simpleton! If you've married him thinking you're going to live on me for the rest of your life, you're mistaken, that's all! I'm done with him! I'm through! And—I've told him so. Not another cent from me . . . not one damn' cent from this day on. I sent him out of the office an hour ago with a flea in his ear. The last straw—that's what this is. A penniless good-for-nothing who can't keep himself, saddling me with a wife to keep."

"I've kept myself a good many years, Senator Baylie," I interrupted, white mad, "without either your help or—Pat's. And I can't see myself exactly starving now, can you?"

A wry grin twisted a little at his unwilling mouth. He said, his voice softening from the tight shrill anger that had held it, to a querulous, old man tremble I'd never heard on the Senator's lips before:

"Look here, girl, you must be mad—all you know about that boy—thinking you can hold him; thinking he'll be true to you. He's been engaged so many times I've lost count, and he's jilted them all. Do you know why he went to Paris this last time? It was because Polly Sidney, the daughter of the richest man in the state, had got him hooked, and he couldn't take it. Threw her over four weeks before they were to have been married. Walked out on her. Oh, the papers had it the other way, I grant you that. Even Pat wasn't skunk enough to let the truth out of the bag, but —I'm telling it to you.

"What luck will you have holding a man that the beautiful and wealthy Polly Sidney couldn't keep?"

I got to my feet and walked to the door. I held it open, and stared at him until he had to go through it. I didn't say a word. But he did.

On the very sill, he turned and shook a pudgy finger so close to my face that I could almost feel it.

"Have it your own way, young lady," he snapped. "Have it your own way . . . but don't say I didn't warn you. Pat's your responsibility now—you've taken over his life. See what you can make of it. God knows you couldn't hash it any more than he has. And—you needn't come whining to me ever—for it won't do you any good!"

WE DIDN'T hear a word from Pat all that afternoon, and all the way home Betty kept stewing about Senator Baylie and the way he had insulted us, until I was nearly crazy.

"Pat's probably gone off and got good and stewed," she said spitefully. "Bet you don't see him again for a week. I thought you'd put us both on easy street, and all you've done is to take on another mouth to feed!"

I made her shut up, but I was careful not to let her see how badly scared I was. And when we walked up the flagged path to our front porch and saw Pat sitting there, big as life and sober as a judge, grinning at us, I felt as though there was a hollow where my stomach should have been, and my knees were shaking so I could hardly walk.

He came to meet me and put his arm around my shoulders. There wasn't a bit of liquor on his breath and his eyes were as clear as my own. "Always thought there was something screwy about that 'Prodigal Son' story," he said. "And—now I know. Instead of killing the fatted calf, the old guy should have given him a kick in the pants. Mine did."

Betty said, "I'll say he did!" and she added with a giggle, "He gave Esther one, too. Boy—you should have heard him!"

I hadn't meant to tell Pat about that, and I was furious at Betty. But—it couldn't be helped. And Pat drew it all out of me—even to what his father had said about his being my responsibility—and about Polly Sidney, too.

I wouldn't have known his mouth when I finished, it looked so much like his father's. Nothing easy and soft about it at all—just a thin, hard line cut in his face. And his eyes were like his father's too, narrow-slitted and still.

But he kissed my hands and covered them with his, and we sat for a long time on the porch together; sat there until Mrs. Green called us into the house for dinner.

The next day Pat went to work. Earl Carter took him in to see his editor, and they gave him a job. Fifty a week. Rewrite work in the editorial rooms.

For a while, I kept on working, with Pat turning every cent over to me and taking the expense money I gave him without a murmur.

He worked like a fiend. And he kept his promise about not drinking, too, I don't know how he did it. There were nights when he never slept a bit and neither did I. When we would walk and walk until we were both so tired we couldn't walk another step, and he'd sleep out of pure bodily weariness, his head on my shoulder.

WHEN I decided to turn my job over to Betty and stay at home, it wasn't because I wanted to, but because Pat begged me so. It hurt his pride, having people think he couldn't take care of his wife, he said. But I knew what was hurting him. It was having his father think so. Pat never cared what the world thought about him, either then or afterwards.

It was fun at first, being a "lady." Pat made me keep Mrs. Green a couple of days a week. He sold some black pearl studs he had and bought a little roadster. Every morning I'd take him and Betty to the train, and be there waiting for them every night when they came home. They'd got to be grand friends, Pat and Betty. They were always laughing and joking together about things that happened down town, and now and then I'd see a look in Betty's eyes when she was around Pat that worried me. A sly, soft, hungry look. And she was always coming up behind him and rumpling his hair.

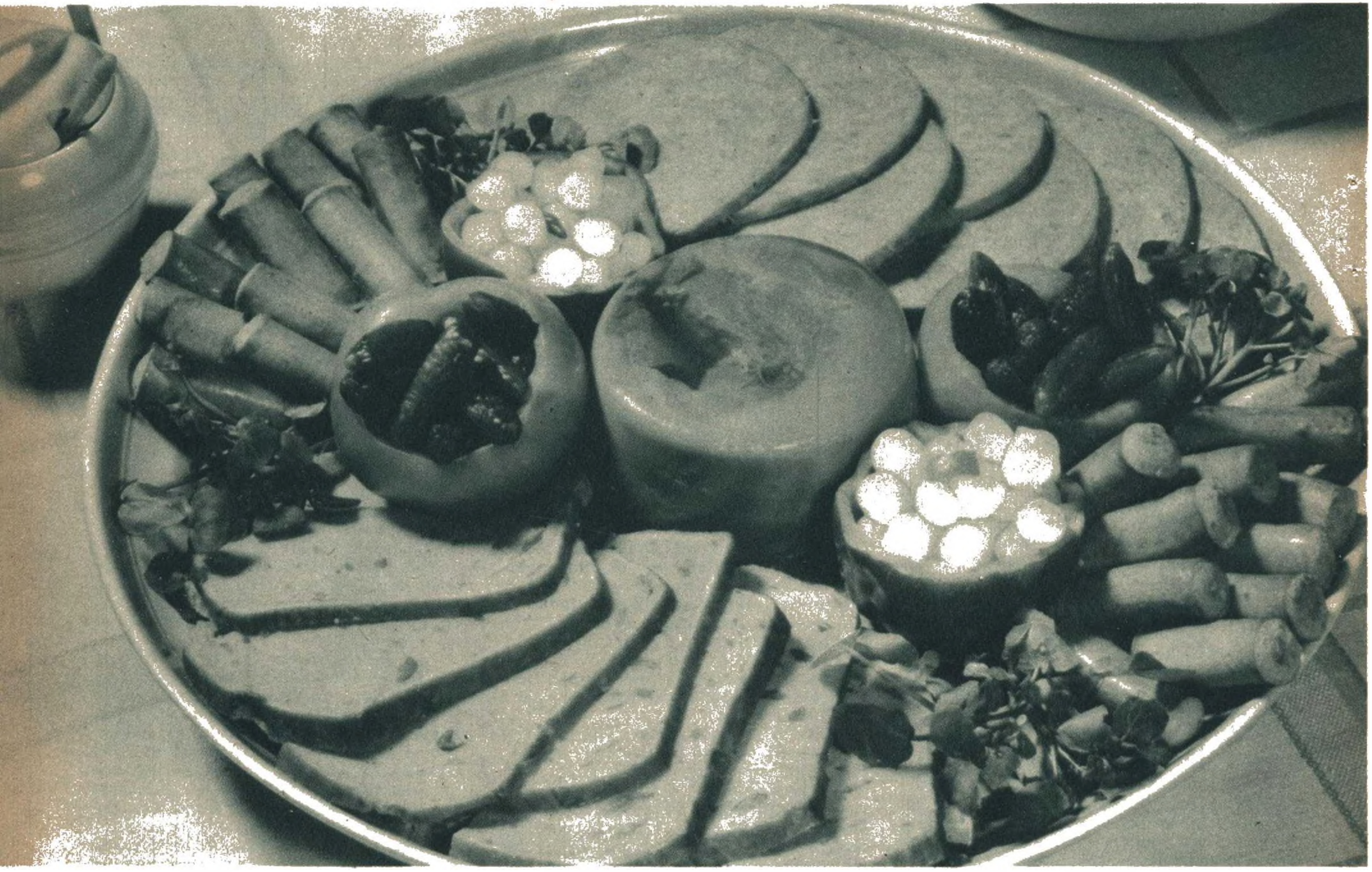
I told myself, "You're a jealous simpleton. A wife without enough to do. Snap out of it. Be yourself!" And I made Pat bring Earl Carter out as often as he could come. Earl wasn't as handsome as Pat, but he was clever and dependable, and he was crazy about Betty.

When I got the gossip at last, it came from two places, Mrs. Green and Earl.

"Miss Esther," Mrs. Green said, "this ain't none of my business and I know it, but I jest can't sit by and keep my mouth shet any longer. You're makin' a awful mistake throwin' that husband of your'n and Betty together th'way you're doin'! I don't know what's come over your sense. In th' first place, there ain't no man livin' I'd trust far as I could throw a bull by th' tail, let alone a handsome one like him. And Betty right at th' silly age. Folks are talking something fierce!"

[*Please turn to page* 54]

CANNED MEATS FOR ECONOMY



A PLATTER of assorted cold cuts and jellied tongue, with relishes, is suitable all year 'round.

MEAT on the menu these days is something for every housewife to worry about. Potatoes, sure; vegetables, they're easy, and desserts are infinite, but "what shall we have for dinner tonight?" means, five times out of seven, "what meat?", and further and still more important, "what price meat?", for meat has been GOING — GOING — GONE, when it comes to paying the increased bills.

It therefore takes more thought and greater ingenuity to stretch the meat dollar than ever before. And husbands who prefer to sit down before a thick 9x12 porterhouse, a large order of French Fries and a double cup of cawfee, are just going to have to LEARN TO LIVE ALONE (as far as expensive meat cuts go) and still LIKE IT!

But in this situation we can learn a great deal from other nations who, for past centuries, never had meat except in the smallest quantities and on special occasions, or who were content with what we call cheaper cuts; rich in flavor but coarse and fibrous in texture. Take the example of the Chinese and their popular Chop Suey. What is the proportion of rice and vegetables as compared to the thin slivers of meat on the top of the dish? Isn't there a great deal more "Suey" than "Chop?" Or go to Turkey and see how much rice is used in comparison to the few morsels of lamb, fish or ham so finely sliced as to be almost invisible. Or, coming westward, recall how much spaghetti, macaroni or noodles there are in proportion to the "meat sauce" the Italian uses for seasoning; or with what care and economy the unmatchable French *menagere*

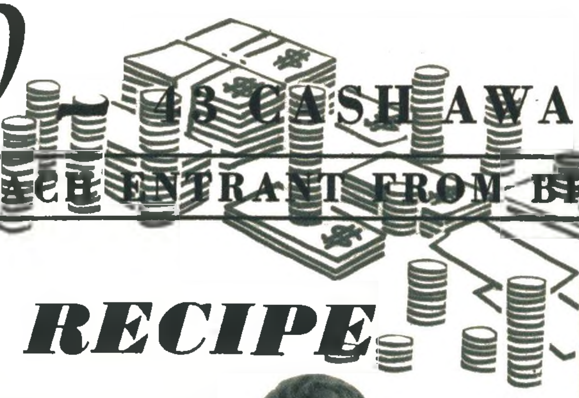
[*Please turn to page* 86]

BY MRS. CHRISTINE FREDERICK

IF YOU have any questions on household management or cooking you'd like answered, write to Mrs. Frederick. Her reputation as a household advisor and domestic science expert is world-wide and she is in a position to give you dependable and helpful advice. Address your letters to Mrs. Christine Frederick, c/o TRUE CONFESSIONS, 1501 Broadway, New York, N. Y. It is not necessary to include a stamp.

THE COZY KITCHEN

$500.00 — 43 CASH AWARDS



A FREE GIFT FOR EACH ENTRANT FROM BRILLO

Just Name This MYSTERY RECIPE

NOTHING TO BUY—IT'S EASY TO WIN!

CHRISTINE FREDERICK

Edward Arnold, Jean Arthur, appearing in the Paramount picture, "Easy Living," are judges with Christine Frederick, our Household Editor.

Here is fun! Adventure! Generous awards in CASH and SILVERWARE. You'll get a free, surprise gift from Brillo, anyway, just for entering. Supply a name for this mystery recipe. That's all. Do it now!

??? MYSTERY DISH ???

2 pounds veal steak
1 pound ham slice
4 tablespoons shortening
4 onions, sliced
2 teaspoons salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
2 tablespoons parsley, minced
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 cups tomato juice
2 tablespoons flour
6 hard cooked eggs

Cut veal into 2-inch squares and ham into 2-inch strips. Saute in shortening, together with onion. Add all seasonings. Add tomato juice which has been heated. Cover, and simmer 30 minutes. Remove meats to greased round casserole. Thicken remaining gravy with flour, and pour over meat. Arrange hard eggs on top.

BISCUIT CRUST

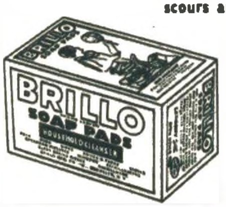
Roll chilled biscuit dough ¼-inch thick, and of size to cover casserole, allowing 1 inch all around. Cut dough into 6 wedges and arrange on hot meat. Turn edges under and press on rim. Fashion a "rose" of left over pastry strips, and insert on top. Bake 20 minutes, very hot oven (450° F.). (Serves 6.)

Mrs. Christine Frederick wants a name for her mystery recipe at the left. Think of a name like "Yum Yum Pie," "Delicioso," and send it in today. Make the dish for your own enjoyment, but whether you make the dish now or not, send in your entry today. Be sure and include the names of the nationally advertised products you would serve in addition to this dish to make a complete meal. Such products are advertised in this magazine, newspapers and in other magazines.

3RD PRIZE—this beautiful 61-piece chest of 1881 (R) Rogers (R) Silverware, made and guaranteed by Oneida, Ltd. A complete chest. Everything for serving eight persons. Graceful Palm Springs Pattern. Follow easy rules at right to win. Use coupon below.

A FREE GIFT FROM BRILLO FOR YOU!

FREE SAMPLE—Big BRILLO metal-fibre SOAP-FILLED PAD. Cleans, scours and polishes. Makes aluminum utensils and all pots and pans look like new. Cuts grease. Removes stains and grime. Saves time. Eliminates messy rags and brushes. Enter contest now and get your BRILLO SOAP PAD *FREE!*



KEEPS ALUMINUM BRILLIANT

RULES 1. Submit as many names as you like on separate sheets of paper. 2. All entries must contain names of at least *three* (3) nationally advertised products to be served with the MYSTERY RECIPE. 3. Contestant's name, address must appear clearly on entry coupon. 4. All entries become property of Fawcett Publications, Inc., and may be used in any way publishers wish. Coupons must be in mail before Midnight, November 1, 1937. Coupons will not be returned. 5. Judges' decisions final. Contest barred to employees and families of Fawcett Publications, Inc., or their agents. 6. Equal awards will be paid in case of ties.

AWARDS $200.00 1st prize; $100.00 2nd prize; 61 Piece Chest of Rogers Silverware 3rd prize; $50.00 4th prize; 20 prizes of $5.00 each; 20 prizes of $2.50 each.

Mail to Christine Frederick, Household Editor, Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1501 Broadway, New York City.

For a complete meal with the above Mystery Recipe I recommend the following advertised products: (Give brand names)

1 Soup ....
2 Salad Dressing ....
3 Crackers ....
4 Dessert ....
5 Pickles ....
6 Coffee ....

MY NAME FOR THE MYSTERY RECIPE IS:

....

Send Brillo Soap Pad Sample to:

Name ....
Street ....
City .... State ....

I Was Faithful In My Fashion

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51]

And Earl said: "You'll probably hate me for this, Esther, but I think you'd better do something about Betty and Pat. Pat's the best friend I've got in the world, and I'd give him the shirt off my back and you know it, but—there's something about him that the women fall for. I—I'm afraid you'd better talk to—Betty."

That day that Earl told me that, I went down town. If I was to have it out with Betty, I had decided to do it in my own environment where I was something besides the "sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam" wife that Pat had wanted to make me. I knew Betty would be alone for Miss North was ill, and hadn't been down for nearly a week.

The outer room was empty when I came through the door, but the door to the little inner room—Miss North's when she was there—was open, and I could hear the sound of voices beyond it—Betty's and Pat's.

I didn't try to be particularly quiet, but I am light on my feet and my rubber heels didn't make much noise. Neither of them heard me come in.

Betty had her arms around Pat's neck, and was trying to strain his stiff-held head down to hers, while she cried and talked all at once, like a child, with the tears streaking her cheeks.

"Oh, I love you so, darling! Lots more than Esther does. It's Jim Warren she's crazy about. She doesn't give a darn what happens to you! She wouldn't mind if you left her and married me! Honest she wouldn't, Pat! And—you'd love me, too, if you'd only let yourself go! I'd make you . . ."

I couldn't listen another minute, I was so sick with shame. If only I could keep them from seeing me! I backed out, quiet as a ghost, and went straight down to Senator Baylie's office. There was only one thing for me to do, and I meant to do it before I had a chance to get frightened or even to think.

I hadn't talked to Pat's father or crossed the threshold of his office since they day Pat had broken the news of our marriage to him, and he, himself, had come to me. I'd never thought I would, either.

As luck would have it, the door to his private office that opened out on the corridor was half open, and looking in, I saw him there alone at his desk. I pushed through without even knocking, and closing the door behind me, walked right up to him.

"Senator," I said, and it sounded to me as though my voice were coming from Mars, it was so thin and small, "you told me once Pat was my responsibility, and —he is. But sometimes people have to have help, even with their responsibilities. I have to have help now. I'm asking you for the only favor I've ever asked or ever will ask—and it isn't for Pat's sake or my own that I'm asking it. It's for the sake of another person who is my responsibility, too. My sister.

"I want you to get Pat a job that will take him away from town right away. Will you, Senator Baylie?"

I looked straight at him and never flinched. I felt like a stone.

For a long minute he stared at me, puffing out his lips and drawing them in again, the way he always did when he was thinking about something terribly hard. Then, all at once, he leaned over and put his hand on my shoulder. There were tears in his eyes. I hadn't realized that I was crying myself, until I felt my own lips salt and wet.

"My dear," he said, "do you think this has been going on under my nose for weeks without my knowing it? Just this minute I don't give a damn for that pup son of mine, but I do for his wife. And I'm beginning to believe that if you can cure him of drinking—and it looks as thought you had—you can cure him of women, too.

"The boy's got a fine brain. He's a born politician and he'll make a go of it. Beat it home and pack your trunks. You're leaving Greenfield in the morning. Nothing big about being the wife of the Governor's secretary, but—it's a start. The rest of it is up to you."

I just said, "Thank you," and went home. But, all the time I was cooking dinner, I was praying that I'd done the right thing. Betty was a romantic, foolish kid. I'd heard enough to know that Pat wasn't the one most to blame, and if his face that afternoon had been any indication, I felt he would be as glad of an easy "out" from an embarrassing predicament, as I was anxious to give him one.

About five Betty called up to tell me she wouldn't be home. Her voice was hoarse and thick. I knew she'd been crying. She said that Earl had called and she was going to the theatre with him. And even while she was talking, I heard the impatient click-click of someone else trying to break in on the line.

I think I knew it was Pat, for my heart began to pound, and the minute Betty had hung up, his call came through. He was almost stuttering with excitement:

"Gosh, kid—have I got the news! I'm catching the five ten—haven't a minute—meet me at the station . . .!"

That was the first time since Pat Baylie and I had been married that I acknowledged to myself that I loved him. I dropped down on my knees and put my head against a chair, and prayed that he would learn to love me, too.

I WAS waiting at the station when he got off the train. His fight against drink had made him terribly thin, but it was a becoming thinness. I'd never realized before how handsome he was and how distinguished. I was seeing him, I guess, from another woman's eyes, and my love for him—that new-born, newly discovered love, was a living thing inside me, crying against my heart.

I shoved over and he pulled his long legs in behind the wheel. He put his arm around my shoulders and squeezed me close. A woman I'd known for years, but who rarely noticed me, turned as she passed and spoke. She wasn't speaking to me, and I knew it. She was speaking to Pat Baylie, through his wife.

"We're going to Greenfield, hon!" he almost shouted. "Greenfield! Governor Crandall called me himself, not two hours ago. Just a secretary—not so much far as money goes, but possibilities, my girl! Possibilities! Always wanted to get into politics — this newspaper game — it isn't mine!

"How do you suppose he thought of me? Maybe the old man's weakening . . .! Maybe he put in his oar . . ."

All the way home he talked. And, while I was getting dinner on the table, he followed me around as Will used to do. He never said a word about Betty. It wasn't until we sat down at the table that that he noticed she wasn't there.

"Where's the kid?" he asked, and when I told him, my face carefully on my plate so he couldn't see my eyes, that she'd called to say she was going out on a date with Earl, I heard him chuckle a little, deep in his throat.

It was later, after we'd gone up to our room, that he said, hesitating a little. "Might's well tell you, Esther, that I had to talk to Betty like a Dutch Uncle today. Thought she was in love with me—funny isn't it? Betty's a sweet kid—and a damn' pretty one. Carter's crazy about her. Sooner she makes up her mind to marry him, the better off she'll be. It's a good thing we're going away, for she isn't going to feel any too pleasant toward me for a while."

And he was right too. She wouldn't even come down to the train to see us off. But when she found out we were leaving the car for her, she felt better about it, and waved at us from the window. Mrs. Green promised to look after her and tell me if anything went wrong.

I felt sorry for her, but I didn't worry about her. I had a feeling she'd got a lesson she wouldn't forget in a hurry.

Greenfield was like a little village after Chicago, but I liked it from the first. We found rooms in a nice private boarding house. Mrs. Hawes, the landlady, made me think of Mrs. Green—large, and almost as red-faced, and just as kind.

That night, after we unpacked, Pat and I went for a walk. Pat had been in Greenfield often. He knew all the show places and where all the "big" people lived. Knew the people themselves, most of them, in an intimate, first-name way.

There was one house I noticed particularly. It sat far back in a grove of trees, it's white pillars shining, and the red glow of the evening sun reflected from what seemed like a thousand windows. It was as large as any house I'd seen in the city, and—because of its lawns and trees, ever so much more impressive.

Pat grunted a little when I told him so. "Ought to be. That's Garr Sidney's place. He's half a dozen strung around over the country bigger than that and has more money than the mint."

Garr Sidney . . . ! All at once I was back in my office in Chicago listening to Senator Baylie telling me about the girl Pat had come so near marrying . . . "Polly Sidney—daughter of the richest man in the Middle-West . . . what luck will you have holding a man that the beautiful and wealthy Polly Sidney couldn't keep . . ." And I was conscious suddenly that Pat was walking much faster than he'd been before—so fast I was almost running to keep up with him. It took just one glance to tell me why. Whizzing down the shrub-bordered drive of the Sidney home was a powerful yellow roadster with a girl at its wheel. And Pat was trying to get across the driveway and out of the way before she saw us.

We made it, but not until I'd got a good look at the girl's face. She was so pretty she took my breath away. She made me think, in an odd throw-back of memory, of an old fairytale—the princess who had skin as white as snow, hair as black as ebony and lips red as blood. But there was something about her, too, that made me think of Betty; something spoiled and willful, and the same hint of stubbornness in the tilt of her dimpled chin.

She slowed a little, and I knew she would have stopped if Pat had given her the chance, but, looking up, I saw that he had his face turned the other way, and that an ugly red flush had crept up over his thin cheeks, and his fingers, dragging at my arm, were so tight they hurt me, and they didn't loosen until her car, heading the other way, had roared itself down the street.

"That was Polly Sidney, wasn't it?" I said, making my voice as quiet as I could. "She would have spoken to you, Pat, if you had given her the chance. Why didn't you? I would like to have met her."

It was the first time I'd even seen Pat confused. And he couldn't meet my eyes. "I—I—I wasn't sure who she was until she had passed," he stammered, "and then it was too late . . . I could hardly run after her and say, 'here—I want you to meet my wife!' could I?"

I should have let it drop right there, but I didn't. I hadn't been jealous of Betty at all, but I was so jealous of this girl whom I'd never seen, that I was actually ill.

"Why don't you tell the truth, Pat?" I said. "You saw the car and you were scared to death for fear you'd have to introduce me." And I added something else—something I was sorry for the minute the words had passed my lips: "It's a pity you didn't marry her when you had the chance, isn't it? You wouldn't be struggling along as a two hundred and fifty dollar a month secretary and living in a second class boarding house, would you?"

We turned around and headed back home. He didn't say a word all the way and neither did I. But, for the first time, I was actually realizing how important Pat's family was, and how far beneath him socially, I must seem. And down deep inside me, I had the awful feeling that he was realizing it, too.

It wasn't a nice feeling, and it grew with the days. It seemed to me I couldn't pick up a newspaper without seeing something about Polly Sidney. She was in everything, doing everything, going everywhere.

"She's awfully popular," Mrs. Hawes told me admiringly. "One of these what you call, sophisticates. Been everywhere and seen everything. What with her looks and her pa's money, she could about have her pick. It's a duke now—a real honest-to-God one. Folks say he chased her all over Europe this summer. That he's crazy to marry her, and that old man Sidney is dead set on having him . . ."

Then she stopped and her face got red. "Guess you know more about her than I do," she laughed, "when you're married to Senator Baylie's son."

"PUTTING up a front" was a new process to me, and it didn't come so easily. But I had to do a lot of it in those days that followed, not only for Mrs. Hawes' benefit, but for Pat's as well.

Pat was really awfully busy getting settled in his new work, and away a lot. We hadn't a penny but his salary, and in a Capitol town like Greenfield, everything comes high.

Pat had to have clothes and be well-groomed always, and when the governor went places and wanted Pat to go with him, it was only natural that he should go.

The governor's secretary has his necessary place, particularly when that secretary is the son of a man like Senator Baylie. But the only place a secretary's wife has, socially, is one that she can make for herself. If I'd had money and clothes it would have been a different matter, but—I had neither.

"I'm Ashamed of My Wife"

PRIZE WINNERS

THE excerpt printed below was taken from the first prize-winning letter of the problem story which appeared in the August issue of TRUE CONFESSIONS. Lack of space does not permit the printing of the other two prize letters.

Mr. J. H., N. C., tells Jim:

"Your problem, though difficult, is not too difficult to be solved. It has been said, and truly, that love can always find a way. Bess loves you still; and although tempted by the soft lips and warm breath of a rich man's daughter, you must also love the wife of your youth. Don't let the flare of middle-age get you; don't let the perfume of riches and .background paralyze your mind."

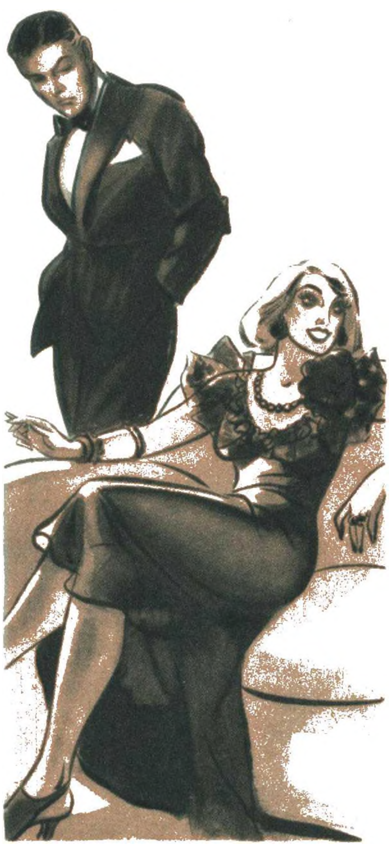
Mr. C. R. H., Tex. Second Prize
Mrs. G. B., Ohio. Third Prize

A PRIZE FOR YOU

There's a check waiting for you if you can send us an interesting solution to the problem presented on page 18 of this magazine. It is called I WANT TO LEAVE MY HUSBAND. Send us your letter today! The prizes are as follows:

First prize.........$15.00 Second prize.....$10.00
Third prize...............$5.00

Address your letters to the *Problem Story Editor*, c/o TRUE CONFESSIONS, 1501 Broadway, New York, N. Y



To do Pat justice, he felt as badly about it as I did—worse.

"I feel like a heel," he groaned, "leaving you here all the time. Gadding around at their damn' luncheons and dinners and what have you. If you'll only be patient, Esther . . . if you'll only stand it for a while, we'll beat this game yet. We'll show them all . . ."

And he'd tell me what a good sport I was, and what it meant to him to be able to come home and find me waiting for him. And he'd take me in his arms and hold me tight, while passion would sweep him like the waves of a sea—a passion born of tensed nerves, tensed ambitions and tensed desires. And always, he slept with his arm across me, his dark, thin face pressed against my shoulder.

But—he never told me he loved me. I got to watching for those words, waiting for them—praying for them. And, when they didn't come, hating myself and hating him until it's a wonder I didn't die.

There was something else Pat never told me, either. And that was, that he was seeing Polly Sidney. I didn't know it either, until one day I saw it in the society news—Pat's name among the list of guests at a party Miss Polly Sidney had given.

Pat had told me he would be away over Sunday, but I had taken it for granted that it was a political conference with the governor, and I had to read the article over and over again, before I could take it in.

I knew, right then and there, that if I wanted to keep Pat Baylie, I had another battle to fight, and this time it wasn't going to be as easy as Betty's had been. And there wouldn't be any Senator Baylie to step in and help. That—it was up to me.

I didn't say a word to Pat—not because I didn't want to, but simply because I couldn't make up my mind just what to say, and before I had made it up, there wasn't any use, for Polly Sidney called on me!

Mrs. Hawes came up to get me, her eyes fairly popping, her cheeks like fire. "Miss Sidney, Mrs. Baylie! Miss Polly Sidney—she's downstairs, asking for *you!*"

"Well, she isn't God is she?" I snapped, and went down without even changing my dress, nor looking at myself in the glass.

"She's come to look me over because I'm Pat's wife," I thought, "and I'll give her a chance to see me—just as I am. And make the most of it."

I was wearing a green knit sports suit, and my hair, which I'd just washed, was caught in a thick, red gold knot at my neck. As I walked down the hallway, I saw myself in the old-fashioned mirror that decked it's wall, and smiled a little wistfully at the dark eyed, golden-haired girl who smiled back at me. I felt a little like Marie Antoinette on the way to the guillotine, and the quick sharp appraisal of Polly Sidney's dark-lashed eyes, didn't lessen the feeling any, either.

"Darling!" she gushed as she swept forward to meet me, "you're Pat's wife! To think of your being in town all these weeks, and my never meeting you! I gave him a good talking to the other night, I'm telling you! Keeping you shut up in a dump like this, when everyone is dying to see you!

"Why no one knew he was married until we dragged it out of him. I let him know I was taking you in hand from now on. A politician's wife, my dear, has so much to do with her husband's success or failure.

"I'm giving a dinner tomorrow night for a few of our most intimate friends—Pat's and mine, and I've promised them all that you'd be there. And don't tell me it's actually true that you've made Pat stop drinking! He was always doing the wierdest things, but that . . .!" Her laugh was thin and brittle, like ice clicking against glass.

Wild horses couldn't have kept me away from that dinner then. But it was different with Pat—he was furious!

"Why didn't you tell her to go to hell?" he stormed. "I'll be damned if I'll parade you out to have you looked over and gossipped about and picked to pieces by a lot of cats! Get a headache, can't you—get something . . ."

I stopped him right there. "I'll get a new dress, and go," I said, "and you'll take me as any man should take his wife."

I needn't have worried. Evening dresses weren't anything new to Pat, and I don't think he saw it at all. After the first quick appraising glance, he hardly looked my way.

After I saw Polly Sidney, I knew the reason why. She was a living flame—red lips, a red band in her coal black hair, and a red dress covered with tiny crystals, thousands of them, that caught the light and blazed. And all the time she was talking to me, she was smiling at Pat, holding him with wilful, devouring eyes.

THAT dinner was a nightmare! "A few of our most intimate friends . . ." she had told me. It seemed to me, looking around that crowded table, that everyone in Greenfield was there. It was agony hearing all about me the gay chatter of people who knew each other well, the intimate exchange of jokes in which I had no part. And Pat, the handsomest of them all, the most distinguished, with Polly never far from him, smiling up into his eyes, her bare shoulder brushing his.

I never knew the name of the man who took me in to the table, any more than he knew me, and I never saw him again. But I remember his words—too well.

"Handsome rake, that guy Baylie," he chuckled in my ear, "and a comer, too—if he learns to let the women alone. Some pair, aren't they—he and Polly Sidney? Pity he didn't take her when he had the chance a couple of years ago. They say he's married now, to some nobody of a wife he's ashamed to be seen with. Certainly hung a millstone around his neck, if he wants to get anywhere in this game!"

It was that very evening, when I would have chosen to have seen him the least, that Jim Warren came back into my life.

I haven't said very much about Jim here—not because I hadn't thought of him. I doubt if a day had gone by since he had passed through the door of my office, bound for China without me, that he hadn't been in my mind, but, somehow, I never had thought of seeing him again. And certainly not—here! He had come in on the heels of a crowd of after dinner guests. I didn't know he was there until he had pulled a chair up beside mine, and was leaning toward me, his eyes searching my face.

Pat and Polly were dancing. They'd passed me just a second before. The hurt of it was still in my eyes.

"Well, Esther?" he questioned, and his hand went out to touch mine where it lay on the arm of my chair. It was hot as fire, and it was almost as though I could feel his lips on mine, they were so close, and there was that same hard eagerness on them that I knew so well.

When I didn't say a word for the shock that held me, he went on, each word a bell clanging against my startled brain:

"Do you know how long it has been since I've seen you? A year and two months. I could tell you the day and the hour, if you wanted to know. And I can tell you something else, too. You're beautiful as an angel and as unhappy as hell!

"I ought to be glad, but—I'm not. For two cents I'd kill that husband of yours and die happy.

"It's Polly Sidney now, isn't it? Three months ago, it was your sister. Oh—I know. China isn't so far away that letters can't reach me. I've kept myself pretty well up on things—where they concerned—you.

"They say you've cured him of drink. Well—drink isn't the only road to hell. Don't take my word for it—ask Polly Sidney. She can tell you the answers."

"The road I was walking with you wasn't such a straight one, was it, Jim?" I asked. And then, because I couldn't bear the hurt in his eyes, I said, "Let's dance, please, Jim!" and rose to my feet.

That was when I realized just how much in love with Pat I was—when the touch of Jim's arms around me left me—cold as ice.

In circling the room, we passed Pat and Polly Sidney again. Polly's back was to me, but even facing me as Pat was, he didn't see me. He was looking straight down into Polly's eyes.

I couldn't stand it any longer. Neither pride nor will power could make me. "Take me home, Jim," I cried. "Please take me home. I've—I've got a frightful headache."

At the door of Mrs. Hawes' boarding house, Jim took my limp body gently in his arms. He hadn't spoken since we'd left the Sidneys.

"My wife died four months ago," he said huskily. "I hadn't meant to tell you. God—what a mess this world is!"

I was too mute to do more than shake my head and Jim, realizing I was not emotionally able to stand any more he quietly left me.

There was a letter from Betty lying under the door where Mrs. Hawes had put it. The first one I'd had from her in almost three weeks. It was full, from the first to the last, of Earl Carter.

I thought, "I hope Earl wants her more than the man I love wants me!" and I wished with all my heart I were out of it all, and with Will. It seemed to me the only place I'd ever find peace.

IT WAS after two when Pat got in. I'd left the light on for him, and when I first saw him, I thought he had been drinking; he was so flushed and his eyes were shining so. My heart came right up into my throat. That was the one thing I knew I couldn't have stood. But when he spoke, I knew it wasn't liquor, but an excitement that was actually choking him.

"Wake up, Esther!" he cried. "Listen! I've struck my stride at last! It's Washington for both of us. Think of it! Washington! I'm playing in the big time from now on! They had a conference over at Sidney's tonight—the governor and Garr Sidney, and some of the other powers, and they're going to groom me for Congress. Guess maybe we won't show the Old Man a thing or two!"

"This is what I've been working for and hoping for ever since we struck this town. I've got my feet on the right road at last! Nothing can stop me now."

Watching him, I thought of what Jim had said about the roads to hell, and of Pat looking down into Polly Sidney's eyes, and I wondered if he really knew just what path his feet were on.

But aloud, I said, "That's wonderful, Pat! I'm glad."

There was something in the flat tonelessness of my words that sent the eagerness out of his face, and brought him to my side in a quick, shamed penitence.

"Gosh, kid, and here I was forgetting all about your having to come home alone. What's the matter? You aren't sick, are you? Mr. Sidney told me you were leaving and I went to find you, but you'd gone. Did you take a taxi, or—"

"Jim Warren brought me." The words blurted out of me before I could think to hold them back, and they frightened me almost as much as they seemed to stun Pat.

He said "Warren? Jim Warren?" and I nodded.

"He's back—on business. Some—oil concessions he had to see Garr Sidney about," I said. And I added dully. "His wife is dead. She died four months ago. He—he told me tonight."

Pat had been standing beside my bed. He sat down then, on its edge. Dropped down as though he were suddenly very tired, and brushed his eyes with the back of his hand. A nervous, childish habit he had when he was worried or terribly upset.

He said, hesitating a little, his voice as tired as his drooping shoulders: "You—you aren't going back to him, are you, Esther? You aren't—thinking of leaving me?"

And before I could answer him, he had thrown himself down beside me, his arms across me, his head buried against my shoulder.

"See me through, Esther!" he pleaded. "Please, see me through! There are so many devils inside me and they're so damn' hard to down! There's something about you that steadies me—something I need as I've never needed anything before. Without you, it'll be the whole crazy merry-go-round over again — drinking, gambling, women — women, gambling, drinking . . .! I can't face it. I'm a coward —a selfish coward, but—stick until I'm surer of myself—don't leave me now!"

If only he had said "I love you" instead of "I need you." How different life would have been!

Political intrigue — scandal — tragedy—heartbreak—you'll find them all in the conclusion of Esther's poignant confession which will appear in November TRUE CONFESSIONS. Order your copy now!

What My Public Didn't Know

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45]

cheeks; gave to my lips the ripe, red fullness of a bride's. Kurt saw it there, and his eyes always flew to my lips when he talked to me.

It would have taken a strong man to have been proof against the sort of idolatry I gave Kurt. A much stronger man than he. But it wasn't until Harriet went to the city on a visit, leaving him alone in Hillsdale for the first time since their marriage, that he actually took what he could have had for the asking any time since I had known him.

I had started home one evening after work when he came up behind me in the little, open roadster he drove, and honked his horn. There wasn't a soul in sight and no cars passing. He motioned me to get in.

"Going your way . . . how about a lift?" he said. But once settled in the seat beside him, our elbows brushing, our knees touching, I knew it wasn't going to be just a lift—and so did he.

I doubt if either of us saw Granny's house when we passed it. I know I didn't. Nor where we went, except that it was some place far enough away from Hillsdale so we were safe from prying eyes. We had our dinner there, and after we had eaten, we went out to a little grove of trees back from the road, where it was quiet and soft with the coming dusk, and Kurt, throwing himself down on the warm, dry moss, pulled me down beside him. We watched the big harvest moon rise through the roof of sheltering trees.

"You're a witch," he said. "A little black-haired, purple-eyed witch. This is where you were meant to be, in a grove of trees, beneath a yellow moon!" and drawing me tight against him, he kissed me.

I suppose he had meant that kiss for a light kiss—a casual, haphazard thing, like all the other love-making that had been between us, but it didn't turn out that way.

I know he was more surprised than I at the passion that surged full-blown between us; that swept us like the tide of a flooding river, to batter and toss and bruise; to leave us at last, panting and gasping and clinging, tight-locked in each others straining arms.

To me it was a thing that had to come. Wasn't all love like this? All the great loves of which I had read and dreamed? Giving—giving until one hadn't anything more to give.

When Kurt left me at our gate hours afterward, I was too happy to even worry what Granny would say. I'd never given her any reason to suspect me before, and now—almost stone deaf as she was and tied to the house by rheumatism, I could have told her most anything without danger of being found out.

No fool girl ever had the road to trouble made so easy. In the days that followed Kurt and I met in a good many places, but no place oftener, nor more safely, than in my own room, under Granny's roof.

THE house sat in the middle of a huge vacant lot, and far back from the road. There were trees all around it. Sugar maples thick with leaves; chestnuts, gnarled, widespread; and old even in my grandfather's time. As though a forest had been hollowed out and the buildings dropped down inside it.

Because of her rhumatism, granny slept on the first floor, just off the kitchen, but my room was upstairs with its two side windows opening on a rotting, tip-tilted balcony, from which a flight of rickety steps led to the weed-grown garden, and to the windbreak of tall pines that hedged it below.

It had begun by my going down that way to Kurt, when Granny thought me safely in bed. But it ended by his coming up those stairs to me without my knowing it the first time—so softly, that at first I hadn't heard him. Just the creak of the rotten boardings, and his shadow, dark against the moonlight; then Kurt, tall and blonde, there inside my room with me, with the moon shining on his outstretched arms and smiling face.

The moon was still in the sky when he left, but faint and white against the coming dawn, and in spite of what happened afterward—in spite of the misery and sorrow and shame—I'll never again hear the wind in the pines, nor smell the heavy sweetness of honeysuckle wet with dew, that I won't feel Kurt's arms around me and tremble to the ecstasy of his hungry lips on mine!

Harriet was gone three months. The city at first, then north to some lake resort with friends. Kurt came up those balcony stairs so often, that I used to wonder, sometimes, if they had grown to known his footsteps, too, and watch for them.

We used to pose, Romeo and Juliet fashion on the balcony before he came up. I knew I shouldn't let him—but I wanted him! I wanted him!

Long hours in his arms—long hours with the darkness hedging us in. Dreams come true—all the beautiful dreams that my heart had grown to know so well, finding life. "I love you! I love you!" I whispered with all its foolish book embroiderings, against lips that sought mine eagerly, even while they mocked:

"Funny baby! Pretty baby! Quit romancing. Come out of that book-world where you live! Kiss me. Your mouth is so sweet! It's so soft against mine! It's so like a baby's mouth, it scares me.

"Here where the moon shines . . . I want to see your eyes. I feel like a cradle-snatcher till I look at them—They're old! Old as sin . . . You know we're sinning, don't you, Chrissie? You know what we're doing is a sin?"

"Nothing is a sin when you love," I told him. I'd read that somewhere and I believed it. Not only because it was beautiful, but because I wanted to believe it.

For the same reason Kurt believed me wise.

For the same reason he would push me away from him and cry fiercely down against my lips: "Who taught you to kiss like this? Who taught you to love? You never got that out of your books . . . you can't tell me!"

Accusations that always ended in my tears and his comforting arms.

Things like that hurt me terribly. I couldn't understand then. I did later. Kurt didn't want to believe I was young and innocent and green. It made it easier for him to shut his eyes . . .

He wanted to be able to say "She's had a good time and so have I," when the end came, and then wash his hands of it all and laugh.

Perhaps he even had planned that kind of end; I wouldn't be surprised. For he had told me that Harriet was arranging an "around the world" tour, and that, if it went through, he would have to go.

But he certainly hadn't planned the way the end came any more than I had.

IT WAS Granny who brought it about—creeping up the stairs, so silently neither of us had heard her, and finding us tight-locked in each other's arms!

It happened—of all nights—the night Kurt came to say goodby; to tell me that all the details were arranged, and Harriet was waiting for him to join her in Chicago.

I'll never be sure what it was that had stirred Granny's suspicions. We'd thought ourselves so safe, Kurt and I, that maybe we had grown careless—Kurt with his steps on the creaky stairs, me, with my love-filled whispers carrying too clearly through my latchless, sagging door.

Granny was old, but her eyes behind their thick lenses, were wise with years. Perhaps she had seen something in my face—in my eyes, my full red lips—something that spoke too plainly of love and a lover's kissing.

But whatever it was, it had answered. She must have made those stairs on her hands and knees. She was so crippled with rheumatism, she couldn't have walked them. Had she tried, the tap of her cane, without which she never moved, would have warned us. But the first we knew, Kurt and I, there she was, standing above us, in that moonlight-flooded room, with her grey, straggling hair, and her sunken lips, writhing out! "Chrissie! Chrissie Lehigh!" from the wrinkled, tortured mask that held them.

She had her cane drawn back to strike us as she fell. A heart, weakened by rheumatism, and strained beyond its limit by shock. I'll never forget the clatter of that falling cane; how it caught up the strangled gulp of what had been my name, and beat upon it. Awful music to its awful echo.

Kurt helped me lift her up onto the bed. She was living—but that was all, and Kurt was shaking so he could hardly move. His lips were blue.

"Get a doctor!" I screamed at him. "Do something! It's her heart. We can't stand here and let her die! We've killed her between us—you and I! Killed her! *Do* something!"

"But they'll find me here—they'll know!" he stammered. "I—I can't . . . I—I've got to go, Chrissie! Can't you see—I've got to —go . . . I've got to get out of here, Chrissie before anyone comes! I've got to!"

I hardly heard him. I was down on my knees beside Granny, holding her poor, still head in my arms, and listening in a dull, shocked apathy to the pound of Kurt's feet on the rickety stairs; the bark of a neighbor's dog, ringing angrily out through the night's awful stillness.

I THINK my love for Kurt died with the thinning echo of his running feet.

Granny didn't die until morning, and by that time I had the doctor, and the neighbors had come—and John.

News spread fast in a town the size of Hillsdale.

But Kurt didn't come. Down in my heart I knew he wouldn't come. That he had gone. And I was glad. He and I had killed Granny. Just thinking of him made me sick.

I don't know what I would have done in those awful days if it hadn't been for John—so kind, so pitying, so tender; taking care of things—seeing to everything.

Even he couldn't understand the wildness of my grief. "Don't take it so hard, Chrissie. She was old. It had to come. You've been a good grandchild . . . you weren't to blame . . ."

A good grandchild! Not to blame! I don't know how I kept from blurting out the truth. The words were on my lips a dozen times a day, pushing at them—trembling to be said. But I couldn't say them. It wasn't fear for myself that held them back, but a desperate, shamed loyalty—not to Kurt, but the thing Kurt had meant to me. It had been such a beautiful thing . . . and now it was gone.

I'll go back to work and forget, I told myself. I'll have to. I might have forgotten—who knows? I was young. But fate wasn't giving me a chance to forget. Before Granny had been a month in her grave, I found out that I was going to have a baby.

I didn't have sense enough to find that out alone.

It was Abby Brent, the woman John had sent to stay with me at the house, who told me.

Abby liked to cook and she liked to eat. As long as the rich John Wallis was willing to pay for it, well . . .

Sausages and cakes for breakfast. Coffee in huge cups, yellow with cream. Heavy suppers. Potatoes, meat, cake, pie—day after day, facing those meals, pushing my plate away from me, choking and gagging with nausea. Getting up in the morning, to stand, sick and gasping while the walls reeled about me.

"I'm nervous," I told Abby. "Food makes me sick. Everything makes me sick."

Abby said, "Nervous, hmph! If I didn't know you'd never looked at a man in your life, I'd say you were going to have a baby, Chrissie Lehigh! You've certainly got all the symptoms!"

I don't know how I got out of the room—but I did. I don't know how I got through the weeks that followed—but I did that, too. Keeping my secret, fighting down the panic that each day grew greater in me. Going to work, coming home. Avoiding everyone—speaking to no one, not even Abby, unless I had to. Going to my room, and closing the door, and lying there night after night, hating my sleep for the dreams it brought—dreading the morning for the fears it would bring.

IT WAS nearly three months after Granny's death, when Abby found me one morning on the floor of my room, twisted and screaming with pain, and called a doctor.

Hillsdale boasted a small hospital. They got me there. They saved my life but not my baby's. An infection that comes on women often before a child is born—but that a doctor's watching care could and probably would have prevented.

I remember very little about any of it. I never have wanted to. All I know surely is, that when I came out at last, from the black sea that had held me, John was beside my bed, his face drawn and old and haggard.

As soon as I was able, I told him the truth. He was the only one in all avid, gossip-hungry Hillsdale to whom I did tell it.

And he blamed himself—not me! Blamed himself!

"Kurt! And me not guessing! All these weeks since Hat has been away . . . knowing he was up to something . . . Knowing! Seeing it in his face, in his sly, sneaking ways! Knowing—knowing—knowing, and never thinking it might be you!"

Then he added quietly, so quietly that I thought at first I had dreamed the words:

"You know, don't you, child, that I love you? Not as a child—but as a woman . . . That I've loved you ever since that day I gave you the ring I'd meant as my boy's gift to your girl-mother. That day I put it on your finger instead, and you kissed me.

"You knew it then, too. I saw the shock of it in your eyes. But was it such a repulsive thing? Did it make me such an ogre to you, that you couldn't have brought me your troubles?

"I am not asking you to marry me—I wouldn't be such a coward as to take that advantage of you now—but I'm doing the only thing that's left to do. I'm taking you out of Hillsdale as soon as you can go.

"You're going to have another chance, and you're going to have it free of Hillsdale—and free of me."

I hadn't had a good night's sleep since Granny's death. I slept that night for the first time, as a child sleeps, deeply, dreamlessly, unafraid.

John loved me!

WHAT a different word that was—saying it of John. Thinking it of John. Having him there beside me, asking nothing; reproaching me for nothing, offering me his protection, his strength to lean on. Smiling at me with his slow, sweet smile; touching me so gently, with his big-boned, awkward hands.

I was young and strong. I grew well fast. I hardly ever thought of Kurt. John wouldn't give me time. He filled me so full of hope and plans.

I was to go on the stage. There'd be no more of Hillsdale's curious eyes. There would be New York, training—the best money could buy and when I was ready—a chance—if he had to buy a theatre to give it to me!

When the time came for us to leave, Abby helped me pack.

"Not every girl who has made a fool of herself," she said grimly, "is as lucky as you, Chrissie Lehigh. I hope you appreciate it."

It wasn't appreciation I gave John Wallis. Then—nor through the long weeks and months that followed. It was a clean white flame of worship, stronger and purer than a prayer.

These months in New York—they are like a picture thrown on a vivid, swiftly moving screen.

John went with me. He saw me settled. It was the first time I had seen him away from his familiar Hillsdale background.

A new John. A big man. A man to whom people bowed, and catered. A towering figure in his loose-fitting tweeds, who said quietly: "I will have this, I will do this," and got it and did it!

He found an apartment for me in a quiet Fifth Avenue family hotel, and saw me settled in it. He bought me the clothes I needed. Clothes that turned my pale young prettiness to a beauty it never had known before; that brought out the clear pallor of my skin, and the pathos of my huge, dark eyes and cloudy hair.

When that was accomplished, he called in a man whose name is so great that I am not telling it even here. John said to him—I was there and heard—"This girl has talent. She has youth and beauty. Everything that you need. And I have money.

"I am turning her over to you—train her. Buy her a play. Buy her a stage to put it on, if you have to—but—make her a star."

They say there is nothing that money can't do. There was nothing it didn't do for me . . . except give me John.

He left for Hillsdale that night, and he took my heart with him. I doubt if I would have told him so, even had I known it. This was a new John Wallis. I was afraid of him. Not once, since that day at my bedside, had he again mentioned his love for me.

Even of his kindnesses, he made impersonal things that chilled me; that built a wall between us, that the very humbleness of my gratitude strengthened.

When we said our goodbyes, I would have kissed him—begged to, but he put me aside with the first roughness he ever had shown me.

"For God's sake," he rasped, "What do you think I am? A stone? I spent the first half of my life forgetting your mother. I don't intend to spend the rest of it forgetting you! You are grateful to me—of course. Then show it by letting me alone! I've done my part—you do yours. This is your chance—make the most of it."

And he had gone without looking behind him, while I watched him go; defiant, hurt pride drying my tears.

Through the weeks that followed—the months, he neither wrote me, came to see me nor called. I threw myself into my work, buried myself in it. Studied as I'd never studied before.

It was John's money that gave me my chance. But it was neither his money nor his kindness that brought me my measure of success at last. It was my own grim determination and Papa Jason's coaching.

Papa Jason was a funny little man, threadbare and fat and bald. But he was a teacher and a friend. I never knew his real name. No one seemed to. It was just "Papa Jason" up and down Broadway, wherever theatre folks gathered.

He bullied me and praised me and scolded me. He even punished me, shaking me till my teeth rattled. Screaming in his thin, high falsetto: "Dumb! Stupid! Von't you ever learn! Vere are your vits! Say dot again . . . say it right! *Right*, do you hear!"

When he had finished with me I did say it right. Whatever it was he had given me to say—whether it was Juliet's sweet agonizing, or the oh's and ah's of the exercises he drilled me in hour upon hour each day.

It was Papa Jason too, who found the play in which I was to make my start. A simple thing; of youth and tragedy, of laughter and tears.

"You are young," he said. "Ve must keep you so. You are fresh and innocent and green. Ve will play it up. I know Broadway. She is funny. Now and then one comes, like you—and she either laughs or—loves. She vill lof you. I—Papa Jason say it."

PAPA JASON was right. Broadway did love me.

It wasn't that there was anything great about me. Papa Jason told me that and I knew it. But here was a new play by a new writer—a new actress in a part that suited her.

Not an actress—just a frightened, wide-eyed girl with dark eyes and cloudy hair, living her lines before them—not acting them. Living her heartbreak—living her joy.

They took me to their arms—bored, sophisticated Broadway. My youth, my ignorance. The stiff, sacred, school-girl bows I gave their calls.

And while the critics saw me with colder eyes, they too, were kind.

". . . Not a finished performance, but a good one . . . A few more years—parts that suit her, and then—perhaps . . . a Star. Who knows?"

Behind the scenes that first night, there were flowers and messages, and Papa Jason to kiss me on my cheeks, and pump my hands wildly up and down. But there was no John. No word from him.

I sat all night, before the window of my room, staring out at New York, spread beneath me, and slept at last, still sitting there, my tired head on my folded arms, my triumph bitter in my mouth.

The days went fast. Busy days. Perfect days, except for my loneliness for John and my need for him. I never slept at night without his name on my lips. I never wakened in the morning, that he wasn't there, in my thoughts to greet me.

I never saw the telephone that I didn't ache to call him. But I wouldn't let myself. "He knows where I am," I thought miserably. "It was just my mother in me he loved—not me. I'm just soiled and cheap. Something Kurt has had—and thrown aside. A stray kitten, that he picked from the ditch and saved."

Our theatre lease had four months to run. I'd taken it for granted we would renew, or go on the road. But with the time nearly up, Papa Jason came to me chattering with excitement, his round face beaming:

Keep that SCHOOL GIRL FIGURE

Here are a few suggestions for you girls who want to keep trim and fit:

1. Go in for sports such as—roller skating, ice skating, swimming, tennis, golf and so on.

2. Do a few simple exercises every evening before retiring; also upon rising in the morning. Here is one that is grand for that thickening waistline: Lie on your back on the floor, knees bent and arms outstretched. Flop your legs first to the right and then to the left.

3. Watch your diet! Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables but avoid rich, heavy foods and starches.

"Vot a chance, my dear! Vot a chance! It's London—dey vant you! Broadway—dey lof you, but dey grow tired! Dis—Ah! It is de t'ing you vant! Give you time to ripen—grow wise. Ve vill stay—a year maybe—two. Ven you come back you will be great! You vill play before de King. Dey like dot here in America."

That night I wrote John. The first letter I'd ever written him.

I wrote out my heart—its need for him. Its love for him that had grown with the months.

". . . Not a warmed-over love, John, dear. Not that," I scrawled, "but the first real love I've ever known. The first true love. The only one. What I gave Kurt wasn't real—it was a dream—something I'd made up out of books. What I'm giving you life has taught me—life and pain. All these months, John, not a minute that I haven't loved you. Not a minute I haven't wanted you. Not a thing I have done or made of myself that hasn't been for you and because of you—and with you in my heart. I don't want London, John. I don't want success. All I want is you. I'm not good enough for you—I know that. You should have the best—not a miserable, spoiled thing like me. But if you want me—if you'll take me . . . I'm sending this airmailed, special. Come for me, John, please. I haven't any pride left. I haven't anything but love. Come for me, John."

I counted the hours and the minutes before he would get it, and watched the 'phone. And when that didn't ring—

"He's coming. He's going to surprise me. Maybe he'll fly!" I exulted.

A day—two days—three. A week. Checking up at the airport for wrecked planes—undelivered mail. Watching the trains, hoping, waiting, expecting.

"He doesn't want me," I told myself dully. "Why in heaven's name, should he? He's John Wallis. I'm just soiled goods. The leavings of another man." And, for the first time since Granny's death, I began to brood over Kurt and hate him.

I'd never really hated him before.

IT WAS the tenth night after I had sent that letter to John that Kurt came back into my life.

I'll never forget it if I live to be a million. Taking my cue, stepping out on the stage, sending my eager, heartsick eyes searching as they always did over the packed theatre hunting John, and finding Kurt instead. He sat below me in the orchestra row, so close it seemed to me I could have touched him, staring up at me.

It was a good thing my lines were automatic. I got through them some way, but all the time my heart was crying, over and over again: "It's Kurt! He's going to try to see me—it's in his eyes. When the curtain goes down on my last scene, he'll be back in my dressing room waiting for me. I'll have to talk to him, hear him talk, breathe the same air with him." Sick loathing choked me.

When I took my final call, and saw his empty seat there before me, my knees were shaking so I could hardly stand. I could see Granny, as I'd seen her that terrible night when she had caught me in Kurt's arms, and I could hear the clatter of her falling cane as it had hit my bedroom floor.

Suddenly all the glamourous months that lay behind me, were as though they never had been. I wasn't Christine Leighton, the actress, successful, her feet on the ladder, her life before her. I was little Chrissie Lehigh of Hillsdale. Miserable, sordid—and terribly afraid.

I never had liked visitors in my dressing room. I hadn't even a maid, except for quick changes between curtains. After the play was over, I liked to take off my own make-up and rest.

Papa Jason knew and approved, and had made himself a red-faced, militant bodyguard at my door.

He was there now, his face redder than usual, his bulging eyes apologetic.

"A man—he says his name is Telson. Dot you vill see him. He pushes himself in. Vot should I do?"

"Wait here," I said wearily, "I'll see him. It's all right. Just wait here."

The door was closing behind me, and Kurt and I were standing in the tiny, white-lit room alone, facing each other for the first time since Granny's death.

Kurt was the one who spoke first. Through my daze I was conscious that this wasn't the Hillsdale Kurt I had known, any more than I was the little Hillsdale Chrissie who had given her wild, first love so lavishly.

The old, easy smile had gone from Kurt's face. The friendliness had gone. In its place was a sullen mouth with twisted, sagging lips. His eyes were bloodshot and there were pouches beneath them, and all about him was a feeling of barriers down, of fences broken; of unrestraint, dissipation, small evils grown large.

The voice was Kurt's. A boy's voice that the drink which had marred his face had not touched or thickened. It was vibrant with all the old eagerness that once had thrilled me so, and quivering with the old desire:

"Chrissie! Chrissie, darling! I've left Hat. I've come back to you! I—love you! No! Don't look at me so. Let me talk. Don't judge me until I'm through . . .

"That night when your grandmother found us, when I ran away like a cur and left you there with her alone. I know it was a rotten thing for me to do. I knew it then, but—I was a coward.

"I've always been—ever since I can remember. Afraid to face things; lying myself out of scrapes, running away from trouble, taking the easiest way. I loved money so. I've always loved it. Hat had so much! It meant traveling, seeing the world; doing the things I'd wanted to do ever since I'd been grown and couldn't.

"It seemed as though, standing there in that little room, with your grandmother on the floor, that I was seeing my whole sordid past. And I couldn't give up the easy life I had as Hat's husband.

"But I loved you, Chrissie. I know you don't believe that. But I did. Only I loved myself more. That is, until two months ago. That was when I heard about the baby. A letter that someone had written Hat, that had followed us half around the world, caught up with us in Paris when we were on our way home.

"It told about your—trouble; that no one knew who the father of the baby was, but that John had taken you to New York, and was making an actress of you. The letter even intimated that it might have been John's. Funny, wasn't it?" he laughed, a bitter, twisted laugh.

I laughed too, as bitterly as he. "If it had been," I told him, "it would be living today and have a name. John Wallis isn't your kind of a man."

He cringed at that and his face whitened, but his voice went stubbornly on. "That's all right. I have it coming. I didn't have to tell Hat the truth, Chrissie. Even you know that. But I did! Do you know why I did it? You've got to know! Because I love you. Because I've always loved you.

"Hat's left me, Chrissie. It's all washed up between us. She's getting a Paris divorce.

"I took the first boat home. I wouldn't have left you that night. I swear to God I wouldn't, if I'd known about the baby. I'm bad—but I'm not that bad.

"I've come to ask you to take me back, Chrissie. To marry me. I'll get a job. I'll play the game straight. I'll learn to be a man.

"Give me a chance, Chrissie. Give me a chance to prove it! Give me a chance, darling! Don't hate me! Don't say no!"

I shook my head. I tried to pity him but I couldn't. I tried to speak, but my lips were cracked and dry. I felt dry inside like a squeezed-out orange. Even the hate that had been in me was gone.

"If you were the last man on earth, Kurt," I said clearly, "and I the last woman, and marrying you would save my soul from hell, I'd rather die damned."

He was on his knees then, his head against my skirts, clinging to me, crying like a woman, threatening to kill himself, threatening to kill me.

I don't know what I would have done, if Papa Jason hadn't heard and come bouncing in. Kurt could have made two of Papa Jason, but he hardly seemed to know when the angry, old man jerked him to his feet, and pushed him, stumbling from the room.

I saw his face just once as the door slammed on him—white and wild-eyed, and quivering.

PAPA JASON knew nothing about my past life. He never had asked and I'd never told. I told him now. It was all I could do. When I had finished he was walking up and down the small room, tearing at his wispy hair.

"If dis comes out we are ruined! *Ruined* I tell you! You are de young—de innocent—dey like you. But scandal like dis if it comes out—if dot man makes you trouble—we are done! All dese months of work—all dot money your good friend John spends . . . it is gone! Phew—like dot!" and he blew on his tossed out hands.

"I know what I do. I get de police on him. I tell dem he is crazy . . . drunk. I call Mr. Wallis, on the phone . . . I—"

"You'll tell them nothing," I said. "If you call John Wallis, I'll walk out of this theatre and never come back. You won't see me again, or anyone else.

"You needn't worry about Kurt. He'll let me alone. Call your London people if you've got to call someone. Call them now—tonight. Tell them we're coming to London. But first take me home. I'm tired."

I laughed at his worry about Kurt, at his fear of leaving me alone. Papa Jason left me at last, to hurry back to his studio to make his London call.

My apartment was on the fourth floor, with the two windows of my bedroom, looking out on the fire escape, and the narrow bricked-in kitchen court below.

I was country born and bred. City fears hadn't had time to root themselves in my blood. I always slept with my windows wide open and the curtains tucked back for more air. The room was hot and stuffy. As soon as I came in, I went to the windows, and threw them open and there stood for a long time staring down at the lights of the court, gleaming below, while the noise of the city rumbled, unheeded about me.

IT WAS late when at last I crawled into bed. I carried all the past with me into my troubled dreams; dreams so light, that the sound of a stealthy foot on the fire escape outside my room, brought me to my feet with the suddenness of an exploding bomb. I was sitting up in my bed, staring, wide-eyed, my heart pounding, when I saw Kurt.

First his hands on the windowsill, then his dark shadowed form, and his face, upturned where the street lights caught it; bare-headed, white and ghostly, with a lock of hair streaking his forehead.

He was through, and inside my room coming toward me, before I could move or scream.

What happened afterward, happened so quickly. It's only, looking back on it, that I can say: I did this—Kurt did that. It's like a picture that has to be seen and re-seen—and each time new aspects pop up that you hadn't remembered before—like the drunken swaying of his walk; the way he had to catch at a chair to steady himself; the white rim around his wide-pupiled eyes that showed so plainly in the dimly shadowed room.

I remember, too, that his collar was torn at his throat. His tie was crooked and pulled under one ear. The reek of whisky filled the room.

But more than all else I remember how he tried to say my name and couldn't, and how he laughed—such a pitiful mockery of the old laugh that I had loved.

"Drunk, Ch-Chrissie . . . drunk! A—a guy has to be drunk, to do what I'm going to. Has to be—s'only way. Going to kill myself, Chrissie . . . right here—in this room. Want you to see me do it—show you I've got—th' guts. Don't think I have do you? Don't think I dare. . . ."

I must have jumped for him. I can't think I stood there and saw a drunken Kurt Telson kill himself without trying to save him! But—I don't remember. I've tried and I can't.

They said afterward—the police and those others who found him—that he didn't even take his gun from his pocket; he just fired it from there, the bullet tearing its way up and through his heart. That his finger was stiff on the trigger when they took him away.

They took me away, too. I don't remember much about that either. The whole thing is a nightmare . . . a tangled, jumbled nightmare. Questions, answers. The police clamoring at me; reporters clamoring.

THE morning papers had the story. All of it.

SPURNED LOVER KILLS SELF IN ACTRESS' ROOM . . . CHRISTINE LEHIGH BARES STORY OF HER LIFE . . . DEAD MAN BROTHER-IN-LAW OF JOHN WALLIS, OIL MILLIONAIRE

By night London had Papa Jason on the wire.

"Contract off—can't possibly go on with it. Christine Lehigh's value was in her freshness, her charm, not her acting. It is ruined. Later if she can come back, prove herself—"

"There'll never be any later," I told Papa Jason wearily, when he brought me the news to my apartment where I had barricaded myself against the reporters who haunted my door. "There'll never be anything any more. I'm finished."

And that was when John came, shoving himself through the crowding reporters that filled the corridor before my door; swearing, ramming his big fists doubled, pounding at my door, pushing at it with angry hands. When Papa Jason turned the lock at last to let him in, he tossed him aside as if he hadn't been there.

Before I could move—before I could think—or cry his name, he had me in his arms, and was holding me high and close against his breast.

"Darling! Sweet! It has been my fault—all of it! I got your letter and I wouldn't come. I didn't dare. For I knew about Kurt. Hat had called me from Paris. I knew he was on his way to you . . . to—to—ask you to marry him. And I thought you still might . . . be in love . . . want him—Oh, my darling, I loved you so! I wanted you to have your chance. Kurt, if you wanted him. If you didn't—London. I'm old enough to be your father. You are young, beautiful—I—I— Put your arms around my neck, darling! Tell me what you said in your letter was true."

WE WERE married that night at the Little Church Around The Corner. Only one of the hundreds of strange weddings it has seen and will see. A tall man with a handsome face and grey-streaked hair, and a young girl with shining eyes. Papa Jason mopping openly at plump, tear-streaked cheeks.

We waited in New York, John and I, until Harriet came to take Kurt's body back to Hillsdale for burial.

John didn't go with her—she didn't want him to. I didn't see her. She didn't want that, either. I couldn't blame her.

Harriet had loved Kurt. She blamed me for his death. Perhaps she always will. Perhaps she will always hate me—the girl who killed her husband and stole her brother.

John hopes that maybe, in the years to come, if we are patient with her and wait, she may soften toward me and feel differently. I hope so. She is John's sister, and it hurts him. But it's the only thing that will ever hurt him, if I can help it!

This is a new life I am starting—my life with John. I'm starting it with some pretty black marks against me—Granny's death. Kurt's. Scandal, shame . . . Yet they are marks that are behind me.

My heart is washed so clean of bitterness! It's filled with such a humble, such a happy love! John's arms around me are so strong and sure and true.

If only I can keep them there! And as long as there is life in me, I shall never stop trying.

My Confession of Summer Madness

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39]

fearlessly at the last. Had I ever been the cautious, smartly hard, little clerk who prided herself on knowing men and how to handle them?

I wouldn't listen to the disturbing stirring of that other girl's cynical caution, that little voice that whispered:

"But, you certainly don't know how you stand with Bob Larkin, as you would with Sam or Benny. Sam 'propositioned you,' and Benny has wanted you to marry him for a long time. But Bob—well, he just loved you, didn't he? So what's the answer? Or don't you want to face it, tonight?"

No, I didn't want to face it! It had been too beautiful to soil with cheap speculations and unworthy fears. Bob was like no other man I'd ever known, and that was one of the reasons I'd loved him. A man like Bob wasn't blunt and crude and right out-and-out with things like the men I was used to. I mustn't ruin this miracle that had come my way by being crude myself.

I WAS experiencing the reaction that any girl feels after a tremendous emotional experience and I jumped nervously when Hope called me from the next room.

"Come on in and talk to me. Wendy, honey. I can't get to sleep."

In the soft glow, Hope looked like some sort of angel with her black hair tumbled over the pillow. Hope was the only really beautiful girl I ever saw, outside of the movies. She had jet black hair and transparently white skin and enormous grey eyes.

She lay and looked at me, unsmiling.

"Wendy, it's awful to realize you've made a hopeless mess of things."

My knees felt suddenly weak and I sat down quickly on the edge of her bed. For never before had Hope admitted the futility of her infatuation for Dr. Lane. I knew she'd been seeing an awful lot of Bill Wells up here, a grand fellow with amateur photography for a hobby, and managing a shoe store for a job. But I hadn't dared hope for what I heard now.

"Wendy, I'm in love with Bill Maxwell! And it's so different from that unhealthy, hot-house kind of feeling I had for Cory Lane that I don't see how I could be capable of feeling such different ways about two men. Oh, Wendy, I want to marry him."

And to my horror, Hope burst into tears. I'd never seen her cry before. She was always so serene and poised; so self-confident, I suppose, because she was so lovely.

"But that makes it swell, doesn't it?" I said anxiously. "Bill's crazy about you. Anybody can see that."

Hope lifted her white face.

"Wendy, Cory sent me this tonight, special delivery."

She brought a little box out from under her pillow, and just for a crazy moment, I thought it might be a ring. Then I saw the contents and felt the blood pounding at my ear-drums.

"Hope! I didn't dream—"

"You didn't dream I'd go the whole way; lose my head so utterly?" she asked bitterly. "I can't tell you the fool I've been, Wendy. I was out of my head about him; all my thoughts, ideas, everything I'd always believed were distorted by the emotion he could kindle in me just at the touch of his hand."

She shivered, and so did I! Didn't I understand that wild, reasonless passion? But Bob was different, different. He wasn't married. He loved me. . . .

Hope went on more calmly:

"Coming up here to camp brought me to my senses, Wendy. Bill taught me that decent men have a code of honor. I don't suppose most of them ever put it into words, but they live it. To them, love and *marriage* go hand in hand."

I kept my icy hands clenched tightly in my lap; forced myself to think of Hope's problem; told myself fiercely that what she was saying couldn't possibly apply to Bob or to me.

"A woman ought to have that code, too," Hope said almost harshly. "I wish to heaven I had had. Cory is furious because I didn't tell him before I came up here." She looked down at the box in her hand. "He doesn't realize that these will do no good; how far things have gone. And he doesn't realize that I—I wouldn't murder a baby, Wendy."

I could only stare at her whitely.

"I'll have to marry Cory, now. He's going to get a divorce, you know. This will just hurry things. He's coming up to talk matters over. I telephoned him after I got this box. Cory and I must be the same kind, or I wouldn't have got into this, Wendy. I'm not the kind of girl for a man like Bill Wells, even if I were free to marry him."

Well, you can be sure I didn't sleep much that night. The glory in Bob's arms under the pines, had become an unreal dream, overshadowed by my anxiety about Hope's trouble, and a deep uneasiness in myself that amounted to fear. All night long that uneasiness possessed me; the light way Bob seemed to have accepted my surrender, there at the last. I just couldn't be wrong about Bob! I had staked my whole soul on the reality of that experience tonight; believed in its sacred meaning; believed in Bob; and in myself. Hope's disclosure had shaken a structure already trembling. Frankly, I was miserable, almost dreading the next meeting with my lover.

EARLY next morning when he whistled, I ran out and he just grinned at me and grabbed my hand as we got on our bikes and pedalled down to the lake. In a few moments we plunged into the cold water. I couldn't swim, but Bob had been teaching me and I was making progress.

"You're a natural in the water, Wendy," he told me now. "You ought to take lessons this winter at the Y."

I was floating on my back as he had taught me, and I looked up into his tanned face and met the vivid blue of his eyes. Realization swept over me overwhelmingly of how utterly I was his now; of how completely I adored him!

"This winter's going to be marvelous, Bob! It's like fate that we're from the same town, isn't it?"

Bob turned on his side and struck out for the raft.

"I'll be back in a few minutes, Wendy," he called over his shoulder.

I sat on the sandy beach and soberly and squarely faced a few facts. They were facts that wouldn't let me be silent when Bob shook the water from his brown body and dropped beside me on the sand. I smiled at him, but only his lips returned the smile. After a while, our bathing things dry, we were pedalling slowly back to the camp. I couldn't stand the suspense any longer.

"What is it, Bob? You're different since last night," I said. Bob got off his bike and leaned it against a sign post, then came and stood beside me.

"I've had time to think," he said soberly. "Time to get the moonlight out of my eyes. Have you, Wendy? Or do girls ever quite recover from moonlight?"

The deepest, most sensitive part of me flinched as though he had struck me. I thought of Hope, and tried to borrow some of her calm dignity, and added a dash of my own nonchalance I had always before known how to use when I needed it.

"I've recovered for the present. But there'll be more moonlight. And I'm always susceptible to it."

I stopped because my heart was breaking, and because Bob leaned toward me, his eyes hard and bright.

"Look! Be honest for a minute, Wendy. Tell me what a girl like you really expects, after an episode like last night."

"Episode? You and your fifty-cent words, Bob darling!" That laughter should be convincing, except that it verged on hysteria. "What does a girl like me expect? Don't you know? Or am I the first girl whose affections you've trifled with? Somehow, I didn't think I was."

There! That's to pay you for the intolerable pain that's tearing my heart to ribbons right now; this awful, soul-sick, self-loathing, this horrible thing, almost like hate, that's trying to replace what I felt for you—only it can't!

Bob said bluntly, "You weren't."

I made the hardest, most desperate effort I'd ever made in my life to get a grip on myself. Hadn't I been half-prepared for this, deep within me? Now what was my cue? To play the game his way and hide my wounds when it was over? Is that what he wanted? To be not the kind of girl he thought I was, but the kind he wanted me to be? I wasn't sure. I was too confused with pain to think clearly. Yet I heard myself ask softly,

"What have you found a girl like me expects, Bob?"

"A proposal or a proposition," he said instantly. "Am I right or am I right?"

"Right, probably, except about one thing," I said carefully. "I don't want either. So it must be I'm not that kind of girl after all."

His blue eyes probed my brown ones.

"I really haven't thought beyond last night, so far as you and I are concerned, Bob," I went on steadily.

"You mean you're content to treat this summer camp interlude as just that, and nothing more?" he asked slowly. "To regard it as an experience apart, with no past and no future?"

"Why not?" I started pedalling abruptly. "I'm famished. And I think I'll go on that hike that's scheduled to Tyler Falls. Going?"

Bob put his arm carefully around me,

and my crazy heart turned over and thumped madly because he was so close to me.

"Then we go on from last night, is that it, Wendy? For seven more nights?"

"Wait!" I protested. I wanted to cry my heart out, somehow rid it of it's awful gnawing pain, but I managed to say lightly: "We said—*no future*. How do I know how I'll feel for seven more nights? Seven nights alike might make it a little monotonous, if that's what you mean."

He shrugged, whirled and mounted his own bike but I was off ahead of him like a flash. I dragged myself up the cabin steps and sank down on my bed, burying my face in the tumbled pillows. So that was that. That's how glory ended! That's how love really was, after you'd fearlessly given everything for it. That's what a girl got who dared to believe in dreams and something better in life than drudgery and the commonplace. Hope's experience was just another proof that it was always that way. The only difference was that Hope had gone into her tragic experience blinded by her unconquerable desire to love and be loved. Hope had been cheated, but I wouldn't be!

I sat up with that fierce determination burning in my heart. I'd be just as sophisticated and casual as Bob thought I was, but I wouldn't be a fool again. And above all, I'd die rather than let him dream how terribly I had cared; how scarred my life would always be, deep within me, because of that one hour in his arms.

THEY were serving breakfast that morning on the rustic veranda of the hotel when Hope and I strolled over there, she in white slacks and silk polo shirt, I in dark blue slacks and a lighter blue shirt. The first person we saw was Bill Wells. He's a long, lanky guy with hair as red as my own and eyes nearly as blue as Bob's, and the kind of face you just have to describe as good.

When he saw Hope, he turned his chair over getting up, and his whole face—eyes, mouth, everything—seemed to shine.

"Just in time for some of my own trout!" he exulted. "Caught 'em myself yesterday and had the chef do 'em up right. You're looking tops this morning, Hope."

It wasn't exactly true, for there were shadows under Hope's lovely eyes, but love never sees all the blemishes.

"Thanks, Bill," Hope said quietly. "But I doubt if I'm up to trout this morning, though they look lovely."

She had lifted the silver cover off the platter and disclosed three brown beauties reposing among crisp, green water cress and circles of yellow lemon. Then I saw Hope shudder! Bill didn't seem to. He was lifting one trout to her plate, one to mine.

"Coming on the hike that starts in an hour, girls?" he asked conversationally, but the eagerness in his eyes was for Hope. "I've got a color-film in my movie camera, and I thought—"

"I'm expecting a guest any time, and I don't think I'd better leave camp," Hope explained. Her eyes were on her plate and I saw how white her lips were. She stood up suddenly. "I think I'll go back to the cabin and lie down. I'm sorry. No, don't come with me, either of you. I'll manage, I'd really rather—"

Bill was nearly as pale as she was as he stood staring after her until she disappeared down the pine-edged trail to the cabins. Then he dropped to his chair, looked across at me, and held my eyes so fiercely with his, I couldn't look away.

"Hope's ill," he said. "And I think I know what's the matter. The sister I live with has two kids and another one coming. Wendy, is Hope married? Is it her husband she's expecting?"

I was so stunned by Bill's hitting on so much of the truth that I couldn't have lied to save my soul. And I had thought Bill just a little blind and dumb!

"No," I said. He looked relieved.

"But she's crazy about the man, isn't she?" he insisted. "Then where's the joker in it? Won't he marry her? Good grief, doesn't he want to?"

"I don't know. He's married."

Bill sank back. He looked gaunt and tired, years older.

"So that's it. Give me the low down, Wendy, and don't hold out anything. I want it straight."

When I had finished, he said grimly:

"I'll get that guy up here. I'll make him say one way or the other what he expects to do."

. . . offer our guests individual puffs already powdered.

. . . shine our eyelids with a reliable eye tissue oil.

. . . sew fasteners in our clothes to keep shoulder straps from slipping.

. . . try a new way of wearing our hair at least once a year.

"Bill, you mustn't! Hope would feel awful if she knew I told you. She's my best friend. I'd do anything for her."

"Then play along with me and we may both be able to be of some help. This guy's got to be made to see that the baby's his; that he's got a responsibility towards Hope."

"Maybe he does see. Maybe—"

"Yeah. Maybe."

I'll confess I felt about the same way about it that Bill did. I doubted if Cory Lane had ever meant to divorce his wife. What messes people did make of their lives, letting their emotion sweep them away, instead of using their heads! But I was a fine one to talk!

THE next few day in camp were pretty awful. Hope was white and hollow-eyed, every nerve taut, waiting for Cory to arrive.

"A doctor can't always get away when he thinks he can," she'd say tonelessly.

She went to none of the parties those last nights; she just sat on the cabin porch a lot, or on the lakeshore, and Bill was always beside her, although neither seemed to have much to say. They were just waiting, and there was something fateful and ominous about it.

My own heartache lay like a leaden lump in me, but I tried desperately not to show it. I saw nothing of Bob during the days. Bill said he was working like a madman mornings at his typewriter, and behaving like a lunatic afternoons; taking long tramps alone, snapping off all overtures of friendliness.

"You must have turned him down, Wendy," Bill said once bluntly. "Gosh, he's a swell fellow. I thought at first you thought so, too."

"I did think so," I said bitterly. "But you're wrong about me turning him down, Bill. I didn't get a chance to."

"Maybe all women are fools." I thought desolately, "Hope and I, and others like us. Selling our souls for men like Cory Lane and—and Bob Larken, while real men who are fine and tender and capable of loyalty and lasting love, men like Bill Wells and Benny back home, and thousands of others, are passed up and ignored. It's not sense—but it's the way things are."

I didn't see Bob during the days, but nights I saw him. There was always dancing at the hotel and parties going on in the cabins. Sometimes I went with Bob, sometimes with someone else. I went to drown out memory and to convince Bob that that night under the pines hadn't meant any more to me than it had to him.

Holding Bob at arm's length wasn't easy on those mad midsummer nights. He was drinking more than at first, and there was an urgency about his arms when I danced with him that communicated itself to my own hot blood, making me dizzy with desire and memory. And his kisses, the huskiness of his voice demanding.

"Lord, Wendy, what do you think I'm made of? You said we'd go on from that night. What are you trying to do to me?"

"Get even," I might have said, but that wasn't quite true. He couldn't want me any more terribly than I wanted him. I was weak with wanting him—but not too weak. One night I managed to say lightly,

"I just don't feel that way toward you, Bob. I did once. I may again. There are more nights—"

His face went white with anger. Abruptly he left me. I stood leaning against a porch pillar, crying until I was weak and had to leave the party. I honestly think that sometimes it was only the knowledge of what happened to Hope, that kept me from tossing all pride and caution to the winds. There was agonizing hours when I thought, "Maybe a few more hours of wonder like that other night would be worth whatever came after! Maybe I am a coward; afraid to take what life offers, afraid to pay the price. If I loved him enough, wouldn't I give everything to make him happy for awhile?"

It's almost fatal when a girl argues that way with herself. It's the first step to surrender. You aren't thinking straight when you think that way, you're too emotion-blinded, too dizzy and drugged with the hunger for your loved one's arms and kisses to see anything clearly.

I WAS dangerously near to that blind surrender—so close to it that I told myself in panic that I was going to have to cut my vacation short. I'd give myself one more night to dance with Bob; to feel his arms around me and his heart thudding against mine as we danced, and then I'd get out!

On that last night that I allowed myself, Cory Lane came. I was just getting into my cape to start out for the evening when his knock came about nine o'clock. Trust Cory Lane to arrive safely after dark! Of course, I couldn't hang around, though I had a fierce desire to put Hope's case before him more bluntly than she would herself. I saw him bend and kiss her lightly on the forehead; saw her white face, the luminous grey eyes. And walking along the piney path to the main house, I thought bitterly, "Men are rotten! Almost all of them. He's fed up with Hope; he's going to let her down. I wonder why he even bothered to come up here?"

That was the strangest, maddest night I've ever lived. Because I was so terribly worried about Hope and so heartsick and unhappy myself, I threw myself into being extra gay, until I danced with Bob.

We danced in silence for a few minutes, and for those precious seconds I gave myself up to the sheer joy of being in his arms; where I'd never be again, after tonight!

"Ted Coleman's throwing a party in his cabin," Bob said finally. "Shall we go over?"

Walking through the starry darkness, my bare arm close against Bob's side, I knew I was doing a wise thing to clear out, to cut my vacation short. I had taken all I could. What was the use of prolonging the agony? Just before we got to the cabin where the party was noisily under way, I told Bob.

"This is my last party, darling. I'm leaving in the morning. Will you miss me a little?"

"Your last party?" he repeated. He didn't answer my question. "Then we must make it a good one!"

Everyone seemed bent on that. The cabin was blue with smoke and heady with liquor fumes. Two dozen people were crowded into the three tiny rooms, and couples were piled two deep on chairs, beds, floors. The radio blared and drunken voices shouted to be heard above it.

He kept urging huskily: "If this is the last night, Wendy, for heaven's sake let's get out of this brawl. I want to talk to you."

My senses were swimming crazily. We were under the stars and Bob's hands were on my bare shoulders.

"Wendy, if tonight ends it all, there are a lot of things I've got to ask you. You've got some explaining to do. You owe it to me. But first—"

He lifted me and kissed me, kissed me till I was dizzy and lost and didn't care; kissed me, not in the hard fierce way he'd been doing lately with nothing but desire in his touch, but in the wild sweet way he had kissed me that one night, with a throbbing, asking tenderness.

I felt myself sinking down and down, into the whirling ecstasy I had known once before. I felt the hot flood of tears that poured down my cheeks; saw the light in the cabin I shared with Hope, off through the dark trees. Hope there, going through her Gethsemane with a man she loved once as I loved Bob, facing her agony, paying her price—as I would have to do sometime. I heard my own ragged voice, harsh and torn, flung at him as I struggled out of his encircling arms.

"You can't do this to me! I won't do this to myself! I never want to see you again. I hate myself; loathe and despise myself, forever letting myself love you, believe in you; for ever being fool enough to think life could be lovely and full of fun and happiness and—and love . . ."

My voice broke utterly, and I turned and ran through the pines.

BLINDLY I stumbled up on the porch of our cabin. Only then was I conscious of the lights in the living room, and voices. I stood petrified, staring through the open windows at that scene; fantastically unreal, like a set for a play.

There was Hope in a white gown standing tall and still as a marble statue, her horrified eyes riveted on the man who had his back to the window. And there was Cory Lane sitting tensely in a deep chair, trying to appear at ease and failing ludicrously.

"I haven't missed much of this," Bill Well's voice lashed out. "Sure I've listened. I happen to love Hope, quaint as it must seem to a louse like you—"

Cory's suave tones, came clearly through the screened in windows.

"Look here, need we be melodramatic about this? Hope, can't you reason with this caveman?"

"I've heard your kind of reasoning," Bill said in a cold, deadly voice. "I heard you cursing her for not telling you sooner; I heard you telling her you'd force her to go through with an operation whether she wanted to or not; I heard you telling her your professional good name counted above everything else with you and you had no intention of divorcing your wife—"

"I meant all that, too," Cory Lane said in a sudden spurt of bravado. Then Bill turned a little, and I saw the leveled gun.

I couldn't move from sheer horror. The scene was a black and white etching, sharper than reality. The black bulk of the men, the white blotch of their faces, the black and white of Hope in her white gown with her black hair and colorless face. One tiny second of motionless eternity, and then a horrible maze of movement and sound!

Hope's cry as she lunged forward between the two men, the sharp, final bark of the gun in Bill's hand, and an awful tearing scream that was my own! And running steps behind me and a voice that cried out, "Wendy, what's happened in there?"

Now it's all a hazy blur. I don't remember that Bob and I walked into that room where tragedy had struck, but we were there, for things were burned into me—scenes, thoughts, words—to live in my memory if I live to be ninety.

Hope wasn't unconscious yet. She lay in Bill's arms staring up into his white, drawn face, and Cory Lane was a pitiful, cringing wreck, staring at them both. Hope's colorless lips were moving.

"He—wasn't worth it, Bill . . . Neither was I . . . I've only myself . . . to blame. From the beginning I knew—there never was a time when I didn't know—he was married . . . that he had no real obligation to me . . . Bill, don't go—yet—Bill . . ."

Her voice trailed off, she slumped in his arms as the dark red stain spread across the snow of her breast. Bill glared up at Cory Lane.

"Do something!" he shouted at him. "If you let her die, I'll finish what I started—"

I heard Bob's voice, a long way off. "Here, sweetheart, some air for you—"

And I felt him lift me, and that was all.

THERE were three of us huddled in a hospital waiting room. We had been there five hours. There was Bill sitting apart, his head in his hands, looking like death. And there were Bob and I standing at a big window, staring down into the street.

I had listened to Bill condemning himself; lashing himself mercilessly, though Bob and I could feel little but a silent admiration for what he had intended to do. I had seen Cory Lane leave for Iowa as soon as Hope was in the hospital, not even waiting to find out whether she would live or die. I had seen the sublime and the despicable; the gallant and the cowardly. Now I heard Bob's low, quiet voice.

"I'm going to tell you something, Wendy. Something I should have told you at the very beginning. Can you listen now, or would you rather wait until we know—"

"Now!" I said. "It can't make any difference."

"I want you to know why I acted as I did. I hate to have you go on thinking I'm a cad—now that I've seen a real cad tonight. I've been married, Wendy."

I felt his steadying hand on my arm, the room was whirling crazily. Did I have to go through what Hope had, and innocently at that?

"*Was*," Bob added quickly. "I'm telling this badly, sweet. I was twenty, a kid in college, and it was one of those spur-of-the-moment things that happen after a wild frat dance. When we sobered up, Pat and I both knew we'd made an awful mess of things. Then we pulled a worse boner, by trying to go on with it. We both quit college and stuck together two months. I got a lot of my contempt for women from contact with Pat, I guess, although we were both equally to blame."

"Poor Bob," I said unsteadily. "I didn't understand—"

"Then you were the sweetest thing; all I'd ever dreamed a woman could be but never was, that night. It was after I left you that all those old reminders came back to warn me; to take the sweetness out of something that had been perfect."

"If you had told me, even then—"

"I lay awake all night going over the horrible details of that other experience. I was sunk. I couldn't hide it, and then you—Well, you changed too, dear. You were too damnably much like Pat had made me believe all women were—hard and casual about what had happened."

"Bob," I whispered, "Do you know what a girl like me expects after a precious experience like the one that night?"

He cupped my face in his two brown hands. We were alone in the world for that moment that was exquisitely our own.

"She expects marriage, Bob," I continued earnestly, "and a little house or flat, and a baby or two, after a while. If she's honest, she does. I—I thought a man like you, would know that."

"I did know it, but it was buried deep under a heap of accumulated rubbish, Wendy, sweet. Wendy, I don't just love you and want you. I need you to make me a human being again."

A door opened and we turned slowly. Bill's rough, red head jerked up and his white lips moved without being able to utter a sound. I felt the hard, strong warmth of Bob's body close to mine, as if to buoy me up for any blow that was to fall—a bulwark of strength and dependability.

The nurse looked at Bill.

"Mrs. Wells will be all right," she said briskly. "I'm so sorry to tell you—but there won't be a baby!" The nurse's voice faltered, "I am sorry . . . But your wife's conscious now and asking for her husband."

"For me?" gulped Bill incredulously.

The nurse smiled pityingly. You could just see her thinking: "Poor boy, he's upset, they've lost their child." She said gently: "You can comfort your wife better than anyone in the world. You can go in now."

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POND'S
COLD CREAM FOR
Cleansing

NOW IN POND'S CREAMS
the active "Skin-Vitamin"

Love Fling of a "Gigolette"

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33]

Escort Club and cast a knowing eye upon the fair-haired boy beside me. He knew, too, that I wasn't playing him for a sucker. Little Lester would leave the track with pockets bulging, unless he listened to some crooked tout and took a plunge on his own. To lessen the danger of that, I always insisted on holding the stakes until we left the track.

"Now let's get it straight," I told Lester before the bugle sounded for the first race. "You're putting up fifty dollars for the day's play. It's to be your money we're betting on, and, at the end of the last race, it's still to be your money. But until then, it stays in my purse. Get the idea?"

"Sure," he said in a high-pitched, excited voice. "And if we lose, I'm not squawking."

"What makes you think we could lose?" I snapped.

"But if we win," he insisted, "you'll let me put you in on a percentage."

"Not on your life," I shuddered. "I'm paid by the Escort Club. When I try to cut myself in I always lose."

"That's silly."

"Sure it's silly. The whole darned racket is silly, especially watching the best horse break his heart because luck won't let him win."

"What's the best horse in this race?" Lester clamored shrilly.

"*Shining Knight*, of course, but we're betting on *Black Whip*, a twenty-to-one long shot.

"Ten dollars, right on the nose," I whispered in Mack's ear.

"Lil, you're kidding," he whispered back. "*Black Whip's* only out for the air."

But Mack knew that when I said *Black Whip* I meant *Black Whip*, and he also knew better than to shout out my bet. So the ticket was passed over to me in a skeptical silence, twenty to one on *Black Whip*, the meanest maiden on the card.

DON'T ask me why I picked him. I certainly had no fondness for the nag. The horses I really loved I seldom could bet on. It was just that back there in the paddock I had felt that direct pull, and that aura I can't describe, hovering over horse and rider. Ask the jockeys what I mean; perhaps they can tell you. I can't.

"Come on, kick me, Lil," Mack groaned when the race was over and *Black Whip* had led by a length and a half. "There you put it right in my hand, and I like a poor sap thought you were slipping. How in the name of the saints do you do it?"

Two hundred dollars they passed out to me for the ten, but the bookies knew that meant I was hot, and before the day was out they'd cash in more than they paid me by following my hunches on their own private bets. Crazy as it sounds, they'll tell you they don't know the why of it any more than I do.

Lester couldn't believe his eyes and held out his hand for the roll. "After the races," I told him, and was already on my way to the paddock.

"Hey, Lil," Mack called after me, and turning the window over to his partner, he followed me across the ring. "Are you playing the Daily Double?"

"Of course."

"Be a good kid," he whispered, "and slip in a ticket for me. Here's the two bucks. Let's see you make it grow!"

"Nothing doing," I grinned. "You know darned well I never buy more than one ticket on a Daily Double, and I never give tips. It's bad luck! So long, Mack, see you on the fourth race."

The Daily Double had to be bet in the machines under the grandstand. For the second race I visited the paddocks, but for the third I had to go to the stables. I picked the favorite in the second and a long shot in the third. That meant if both won, Lester would cash in plenty; if one lost he wouldn't get a cent.

I'd place no more bets until the fourth, for I never picked more than one horse in a race. So with nothing to do for half an hour I climbed the stairs and deliberately sat down beside Terry.

"How can you just—sit?" I demanded. "I'm so excited I can scarcely breathe."

"It just doesn't happen to be the way I get my kicks," he shrugged.

"You get yours by trailing some poor devil into the pen," I retorted. And that wasn't a very good start for a pleasant evening.

I DON'T like to figure out just what the Daily Double paid or what the final winnings totaled for the day. I didn't hit every time, of course, that wouldn't have been any fun, but it averaged two out of three, and the sum was so staggering, considering the original stake, that you wouldn't be likely to believe me, anyhow. Lester didn't, when I tried to stuff it in his pocket.

"But I can't take it," he gasped. "Not all of it. If you won't let me cut you in, at least let's go somewhere and celebrate."

"I can't," I called back. "I've got a date. I'll see you at the track tomorrow."

Terry was waiting for me at the Chula Vista bungalow, grim and disapproving.

"You think you're awful smart, don't you?" he growled.

"I know darned well I am," I exulted. "Did you see 'em come in? I hit 'em one after another, right on the nose."

"And you're trying to make me believe it's on the level," he jeered. "Don't you suppose I know that all race tracks are crooked as corkscrews?"

And that always could make me so mad I'd see red. "And to think I passed up a perfectly good celebration to spend the evening with a crepe hanger," I moaned. "I was going to cook us a swell meal, too, but now you can run along home."

"Forget it, darlin'," he relented at once, and carried me out to the kitchen. "Come on, I'll help. What you got?"

"Steak, onions, french fries and apple pie."

"Now you're talking," he grinned, and commenced to peel potatoes.

After we'd finished eating and cleared everything away, we sat smoking on a couch in the living room. "Of course, I'd have to fall for a man who'd smoke a pipe like that." I wrinkled my nose and rubbed my cheek against the rough cloth of his coat. He went on smoking, and sat for a long time in silence, his eyes half closed.

"Darlin'," he said at last, "when are you going to get sick of it and marry me? I'm needing a wife mighty bad these days."

"You wouldn't by any chance want your wife to be horse-crazy, would you, Terry?"

"The Saints forbid! Horses and babies don't mix. And I'd want a lot of kids around me, darlin'. We might as well get it straight at the start."

I sat with my eyes shut, waiting for the moment when he'd kiss me. I recognized the husky warmth of his voice, and saw the beat of his heart throbbing there in his throat. It was a strong, steady pulse, like the pounding of a powerful dynamo. Back of the tenderness that Terry always had shown me, I knew there must be forces he never had revealed.

"Is it the money you want, Lilly, that makes you stick in spite of all my coaxing?" he demanded.

"No, Terry. It's the excitement, the thrill, the tingle in my blood. I can't give it up. Maybe later it will burn itself out of my blood. But I'm not ready yet, I tell you!"

"So that's it!" I saw the quick color stream into his face; the pounding pulse in his throat strengthened to a wilder turmoil, his arms tightened about me with a fierce pressure. "So—it's excitement—thrill—a tingle in the blood you're wanting. Like—this—"

He crushed my body against the mad racing of his heart. His lips bruised mine with kisses that now held no tenderness. His madness burned through me like a flame. This was a new Terry—frightening, demanding, sweeping aside all sanity.

"I've been too careful of you," he declared. "I've made it too easy for you to get along without me. A thrill is it? All right—"

"Terry," I choked. "Not that—I don't want it this way—"

"How do you know? I've tried to keep you from finding out. But now suppose I make you want it—"

"You can't, not that way! I won't have it," I gasped, beginning to struggle. "I want love—tenderness . . . Not this way!"

"Oh, no, you don't. If you did, you'd stay around where you could get more of it. You wouldn't be running off for thrills. You've got to love me so damned much, you can't get along without me! Then you'll know which to give up, me or the horses."

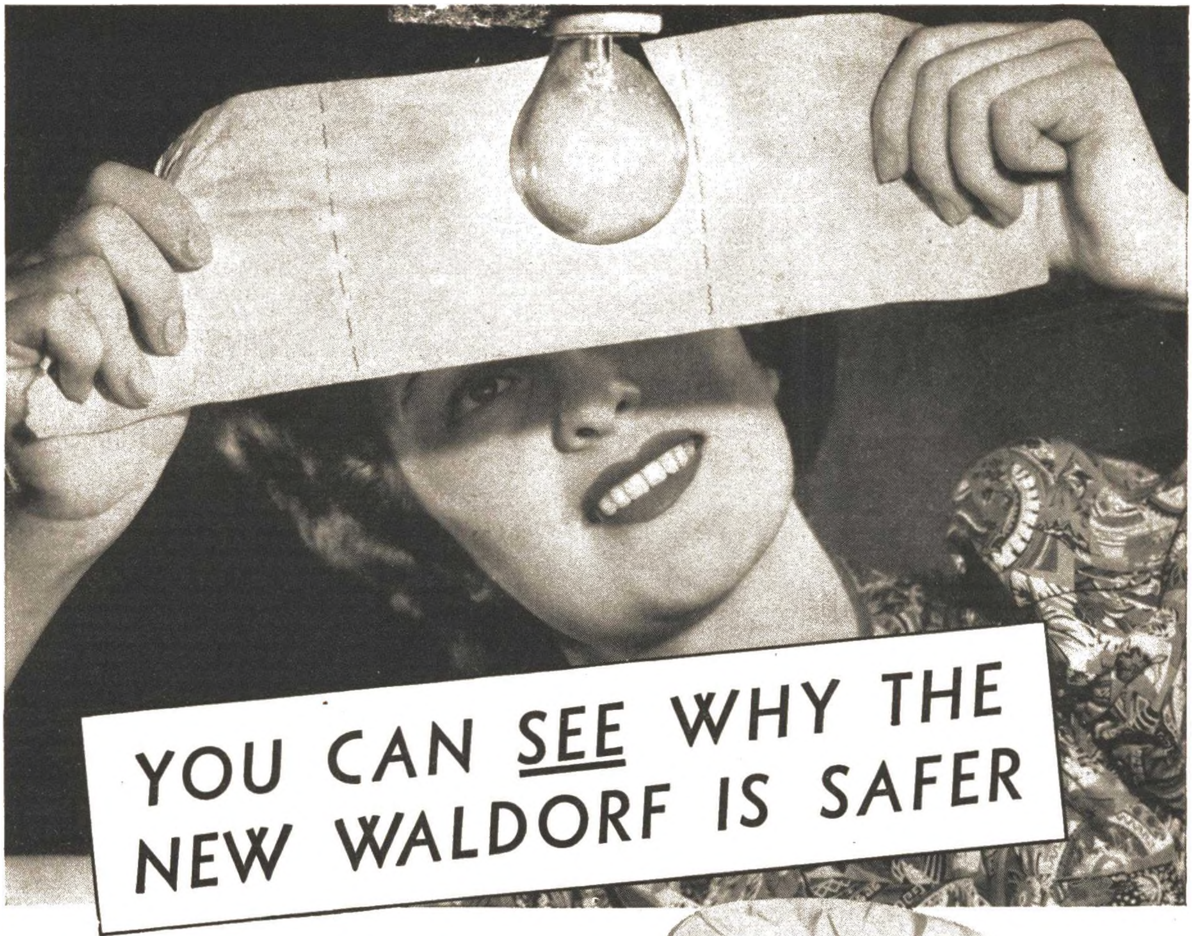
"Terry, I hate you—I swear—if you don't let me go—right now—I'll never see you again—"

"All right—tell me that honestly—an hour from now, and I'll go, and never come back," he exulted, his strong arms bending my wrists against my back, his kisses burning my throat, my face, my lips.

An hour from now—an eternity—through blackness and blazing light. A singing in my ears . . . A torturing ecstasy beyond all bearing . . . And then Terry's voice, hoarse and far off, broken as with tears.

"Darlin'! Little Lilly! I'm a beast! You have the right to hate me! You made me mad, that's all, talking about your thrills, your tingles in the blood, when that's what I've tried to save you from till you were ready; till the time was right and you'd marry me. And now I've spoiled it all, entirely."

I lay with my eyes closed, not moving



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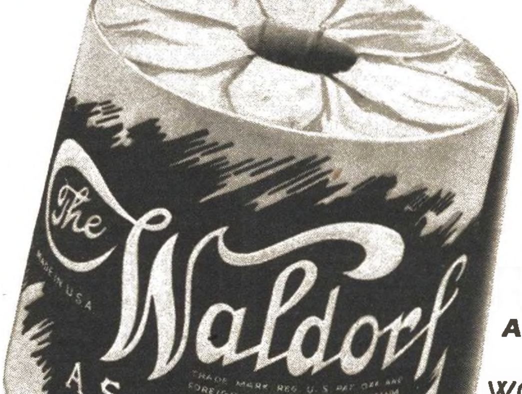
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or speaking until I heard him stumbling toward the door.

"Sure," I sobbed, "you wouldn't want to be marrying a girl now—unless you—had to."

"Lilly—no, no!" He sprang back and caught me again in his arms. "You mustn't be talking like that. It wasn't what I meant at all! I'll marry you the first thing tomorrow morning if you'll go with me. It was just that I didn't think I'd ever be taking you against your will."

"It wasn't against my will," I flared. "No man could make me do anything against my will—ever."

"You mean—Oh, my darlin'!"

"I mean I hate you. I'll never marry you now, and I never want to see you again as long as I live."

But long after he had gone, broken and ashamed, the fire burned in me deep down, and my arms reached out into the darkness, calling his name. "Terry—I didn't know, oh, I didn't *want* to know—not yet." But knowing, there could be no quieting of the turmoil that burned in my blood, no banking of the fires of love he had stirred in me.

Then in agony of spirit, I made a resolve: I'd burn it out on the track tomorrow.

NEXT day, the sun was blazing hot. The track was clear and fast. It was the day of the big Rosecrans Handicap, with the stake the highest of the meet. The crowds were milling around the betting ring, studying form charts and comparing odds. Lester was waiting impatiently for me in the clubhouse.

"You know I thought the fellows were kidding me about Lucky Lilly," he said. "But they didn't know the half of it. Can you do it again?"

"Watch me."

The seven devils were racing again through brain and blood. Lester handed me a portion of the winnings of yesterday converted from silver into bills, stacked in his wallet. "I hold the stake again until the end of the last race," I told him. "After that I'm going back to town, and tomorrow I'm not playing."

"I thought you were to be with me through Sunday."

"No, I'm quitting, tonight."

"Then I think," he blushed and stammered, "I'll telephone my wife to come down. Do you mind?"

"For heaven's sake, why should I?" I burst out irritably. But I couldn't imagine little Lester with a wife!

Again I don't want to estimate the money I took in for Lester. It was too unbelievable, but strangely, it didn't bring me the customary sense of exhilaration. At the end of the last race, I was still burning. Once I could have gone to the Foreign Club in Tia Juana, or to the hotel casino, and played out the fever at blackjack or roulette. But there were no games allowed now, and I couldn't risk taking Lester to Tony's place. Or—could I?

"Do we have to quit now?" Lester complained. "Can't we go to one of the Mexican hot spots? You must know a lot of them."

"What makes you think so?" I snapped, strangely resenting the truth.

"Well—don't you?"

"Sure, but not in Mexico. That's too risky right now. We'll go back across the line; the jails are more comfortable over there."

He looked at me sharply. "You mean—?"

"No, it's all right. Don't mind me. I'm just in a bad temper today. Come on."

Just then I saw Terry's red head towering above the crowd and realized he was striding directly toward me. I think he read my mood in the reckless gleam in my eyes.

"Wait a minute, Lil," he called out and drew me aside. His voice was stern. Even his eyes looked sternly at me—the eyes of a stranger. "I just wanted to tell you not to go to any of the gambling joints tonight—especially not the Silver Club."

"And who says so?"

"I say so," he snapped.

"Then that makes everything just—perfect. Come on, Lester."

All the devils in my blood danced merrily as I watched my chance to tear ahead of the line and swing into a rough short cut I knew that left the home-going traffic behind.

The Silver Club—no, I'd better not tell where it was located—but there it was, resplendant, exciting and a bit sinister, just across the American side of the border. Since gambling was banned in Mexico the color of the place had changed. More rooms had been built on upstairs. Mexican grandees played there now, both for money and for love. The food was good; the liquor excellent, and the place also had won a reputation among wealthy playboys who formerly frequented Caliente. But it was by no means a safe spot for fair-haired boys and I had no business taking Lester there—not if I wanted to keep my job with the Escort Club. I was disobeying one of its most rigid rules, also every decent impulse of my own madly racing heart.

Terry had said not to go, but I was on my way! I stopped first at the hotel so Lester could change, then at the bungalow to slip on my rose and gold glamour cloth. The glittering gaiety of the Silver Club called for evening clothes.

"Remember," I told Lester as we turned in at the palm-bordered driveway to the casino, "I'm playing for you, and still holding the stakes. Watch your step and don't drink anything. This isn't a safe spot to get tight in, not with all that money we've got. Just stick to me, and don't start an argument with *anyone* about *anything*. The way I'm feeling tonight, I'm likely to win—too much."

AND I did. So much that it frightened even myself. Both the wheel and the dice seemed possessed. I couldn't lose. Tony prided himself on running his games straight. That is, his wheels weren't wired, nor his dice loaded. His dealers didn't use marked cards or trick decks. But Tony did have his own idea of how much money one customer should be allowed to get away with, and I was exceeding all limits. I knew that, but I couldn't seem to quit.

It was Lester, himself, who finally pulled at my elbow. "Gosh," he whispered, "I'm hungry! Don't they have food here?"

Yes they had food, quite famous food, but no public dining room. All the meals were served in the private rooms upstairs, and I knew just what else those rooms were used for and how they were equipped. But I glanced at Lester with his slender body, his flushed cheeks and weak mouth and shrugged. After all, why not? Who possibly could be afraid of Lester? Surely not a girl who had been held in the powerful arms of Terry O'Malley!

So I cashed in my chips and led Terry toward the elevator. I knew that Tony was watching us go and felt a tiny shiver of fear run up and down my spine. The first, I think, I ever had felt. Usually the mystery and danger of the place only fascinated me.

Although Tony, himself, was an Italian, he served mostly Mexican food, and his chef knew how to cook it. Lester and I were hungry and we ordered a big meal.

"Great Scott, Lil," Lester stammered over the wine. "How much did you win? I stopped counting around eleven o'clock."

"Too darned much to be comfortable, and as soon as we pay the waiter, we'll be leaving."

But evidently we wouldn't. With the check the waiter also handed me a note from Tony. He wanted to see me outside in the hall.

"I think," I told Lester in a low tone, "that this may mean—trouble. I should have followed that hunch I had back there and gone elsewhere for dinner. But sit tight—" Then I saw that Lester's head was drooping. He evidently was one of those boys who couldn't drink. We'd had only one bottle of wine between us, and my own head was still perfectly clear. Too clear, for it registered instantly just what the summons from Tony meant.

Tony's eyes were smiling and his tone was quite smooth and pleasant when I at last faced him in the hall. It was a railed off passage which looked down, Spanish fashion, upon the casino. He and I must have been clearly visible, as we stood there, to anyone looking up from the big main room.

Then I gasped, and scarcely heard Tony's first words. It couldn't be—and yet it was! There was Terry standing below, his face a stern, inscrutable mask. At the instant I saw him, our eyes met, and clashed.

"We can't let our young friend get away with quite so much cash, Lil," Tony was saying smoothly. "It was his stake you played, wasn't it? I'm willing you should have your cut, but that was a bit more than I can afford to lose. You get the idea, don't you?"

I turned back to him sharply. "Go on, Tony," I said, "I'm afraid I wasn't listening. Just what is it you want?"

"I want you to go back there to the tables and play again. And next time I don't expect you to be quite so lucky. You're putting part of the roll back, Lil, right where it came from. You understand, don't you?"

"I'm afraid I don't quite get you, Tony. I thought you ran your tables straight."

"Straight or crooked, your Club isn't supposed to steer its suckers here, is it? Besides you've been poison to me for quite a while now. Your luck is too damned hot."

"But I'm not losing any, Tony—not tonight. I don't play that way. I know when it's time to quit."

"You want to keep your job with the Escort Club, don't you?"

"Sure, I'm keeping it."

"Not unless you go back there and play—not so lucky—you aren't."

"And if I refuse?"

"It's a long dark drive back to town, Lil."

I laughed then, but I'm afraid it was a bit shakily.

"Or there's another way," Tony's smile still remained oily, and before I realized just what he was doing he opened a door directly behind us and drew me into one of the small private rooms.

For a moment I knew terror, which increased as I saw the sudden change which had come to his face. His eyes were glittering now with a jewel-like malice. His lips seemed strangely to have thickened,

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MORE GENTLE THAN EVER
... and you'll FEEL BETTER after taking it

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and a dark flush was spreading over his face.

"I could use a girl like you around here, Lil," he said hoarsely. His voice, too, had changed from its soft smoothness. "Your luck ought to work both ways, for me as well as your suckers. What do you say, kid, want to play around with me for a while? I'd pay you more than that phoney Escort Club does."

"They don't pay me anything," I began.

'Don't make me laugh. And come to think of it, perhaps I'd better give my own answers. You're staying, Lil, from tonight on! I'll take care of the boy friend and his roll."

I tried to spring away, but his arms were around me, hard coiling arms, pressing with a sinuous strength that turned me suddenly sick. His thick, evil mouth was cövering mine, stifling back my scream.

"Don't be a snake," I panted. "Let me go or I'll—kill you."

"When I'm through you'll be glad to stay," he snarled, and I felt the soft flesh of my shoulder crushed beneath his clawing grasp.

"All right, then," I choked, "if you think you can get away with it. But it just happens I brought my copper friend along with me, and he was standing down there watching us when you dragged me inside this door. I was able to give him the SOS and in a minute or two it's likely to be—curtains—for you."

He wheeled sharply. He and I, at the same moment must have seen the red signal flash ominously over the door. And that in any gambling house spells RAID. He dropped me instantly and flung open the door. The signal also burned red over the clock in the main room. Customers, dealers, cashiers, all saw it, and there was the usual panic-filled moment of wild alarm. What followed after that always must remain to me a vague and horrible blur.

TONY had no further time for me. There were vastly more important concerns to safeguard. There were women in the rooms that surrounded us, some of them socially prominent, who had been promised his protection. There were the vaults containing his money, his records and his supply of doped liquor. I, compared to all that, was of little importance, indeed!

I darted back to Lester, then saw with a sharp cry of dismay that he had completely passed out. His wine had been spiked, of course. I should have realized before I let him drink it, that Tony had no intention of allowing us to leave until I had played again and lost. It would, of course, have been simple for him to drug my liquor, too, and merely take the money away, but Tony's methods wouldn't be quite that crude.

I shook Lester, but it was no use. His head sank limply forward on the table. I couldn't just go and leave him—and yet I mustn't be caught in the raid. I knew a way out—across the balcony and down an outside stairway, hidden by thick vines from the street. Tony had jokingly told me about it once. But I couldn't be yellow enough to leave the boy I'd brought here in such a beastly jam, just to save my own skin.

Downstairs hell had broken loose. The police were inside. Frantically I was trying to drag Lester to the balcony when I felt him swept out of my arms and lifted as if he'd been a sack of meal on Terry's massive shoulders.

"Come on," he growled in my ear,

"You darned little fool. I'm getting you and the kid out of here."

"This way then, Terry," I gasped, and tried to move toward the hidden stairway, but he wrung my arm with a cruel grip and dragged me along through the hall and down the main staircase.

There were hot-blooded Mexicans down there in that fighting mass, and these to them were the hated American police. So that didn't make it just a sane and peaceable raid. It turned it into a race war, with guns and knives flashing.

Terry somehow got me and his limp burden outside, and a way was cleared for us by the other officers.

"Where's your car?" Terry demanded. Half blindly I ran toward it, and jammed in the key. Terry flung Lester down in the seat beside me and slammed the door.

"Now take this drunk and yourself out of here," he growled savagely. "And I suppose you realize that I ought to be taking you to jail and that this may cost me my job. It all depends on how many of those fellows who saw me dragging you away will keep their mouths shut."

"Oh, Terry—I'm sorry—"

"Sorry, hell," he snapped. "I tried to tell you—and after I found out you were inside, of course, there wasn't any way I could stop the raid. "Now—get going," he added bitterly.

It was only a twenty minute drive from the Silver Club to my house in Chula Vista. Lester lay slumped forward against my arm. With lights dimmed I turned into my driveway and stopped at the back door. I couldn't rouse him, and had to drag him from the car over the sill and inside the kitchen. Breathlessly I let him lie there for a moment in the darkness, then with shaking hands, I switched on the light.

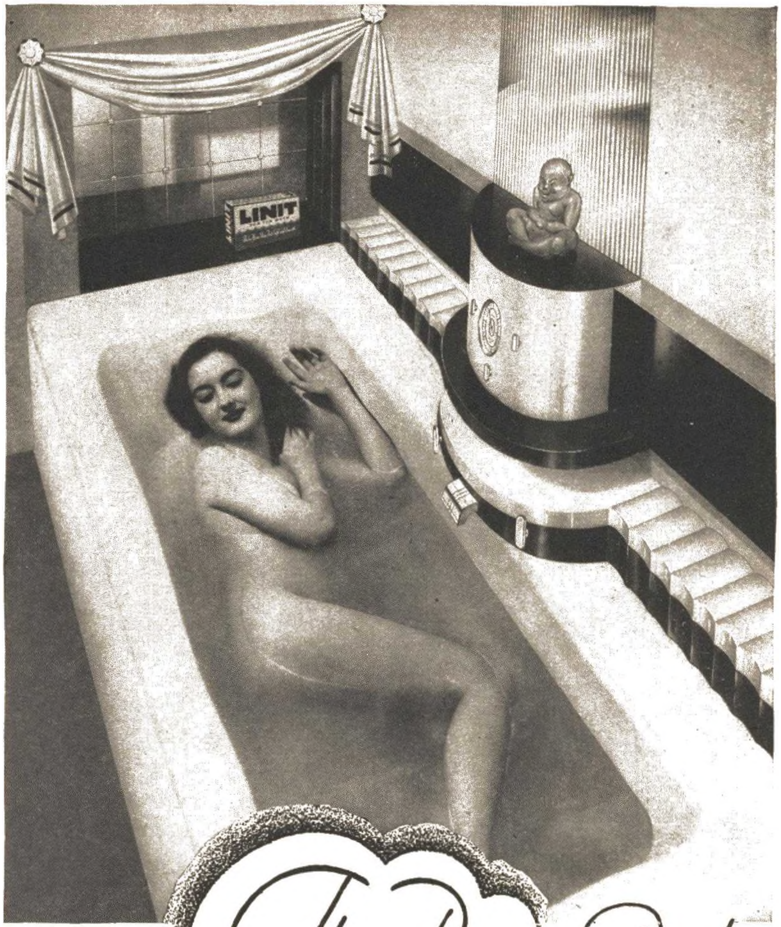
I uttered a sharp, terror-stricken cry. My dress and hands were covered with blood. Lester hadn't merely passed out. He had been shot. The blood was trickling from beneath his coat, in the back. Shot in the back, as Terry had carried him through that fighting mob. And now he was here in my house. I pressed my hands against his heart, but could not feel it beat. With a moan I crumpled down beside him, unable for a moment to move or think. Lester—shot in the gambling dive to which I, a member of the exclusive Escort Club, had taken him.

And that meant tragically more than the mere loss of my job. It meant a scandal, a black mark on the club, and possibly even arrest for me.

My head began to spin—Lester wasn't at the gambling dive now—He was here —in my house; perhaps murdered—and I, alone with him, covered with his blood . . . my purse bulging with his money.

Perhaps I was dreaming. This couldn't have happened. Not to the girl known as —Lucky Lilly!

What to do now. Leave him there and try to find help—a doctor, although I didn't believe that a doctor could do any good now. I had no telephone. Terry would know just what to do—if I could find him. Cold hard fingers closed around my heart. But what could I mean to Terry now? He had seen me coming out of that upstairs room where I had taken Lester. He knew as well as I did the purpose of those rooms. He had seen me also going into that second room with Tony, himself. I had sent him no SOS. That was a lie. What I had sent him had been a mocking, devil-ridden challenge. What right had I to expect him to come



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to me now, no matter how desperately I called?

As if in answer to my unspoken cry, I looked up to see him standing there, grim and white-faced, in the doorway. When he saw my blood-stained dress he sprang forward and lifted me.

"Lilly, darlin'! You were shot?"

Darlin'! Terry had called me darlin' again—Did that mean he still could care—or was it just a slip of the tongue? "No, no," I sobbed, "it's the kid."

He dropped me and bent over the boy. I closed my eyes as I saw him going after the bullet. "That didn't come from an officer's gun," he said quickly. "It must have been one of the Mexicans. We've got an ambulance filled out there. I'm taking him along with the rest."

He lifted Lester carefully and carried him to the police car outside. I saw with relief that Terry had come along. "He probably got that bullet while I was carrying him over my back down stairs," he said. "It was meant for me. I owe him that much, anyhow. He saved my life. You get back in the house, clean yourself up, and remember, you don't know anything about it. You weren't even there."

"But Tony knows—he'll tell—"

"Tony got his—right through the heart. Another Mexican bullet intended for a copper. He won't be telling anything, from now on."

After he had put Lester's crumpled body on the back seat of his car, he ripped the slip covers from mine. "Burn these," he said crisply, "and then go to bed."

"Terry," I faltered, "will you be coming back?"

"Why the devil should I?" he snapped, and drove off into the darkness.

YES, why the devil should he? Mechanically, I stuffed the blood-stained slip covers and my once lovely, glamorous gown into the fireplace and watched them burn. So that ended that. Or, did it? There in my glittering evening bag on the floor was still stuffed the small fortune I had won for Lester, mute testimony now of the devil's own luck. Lucky Lilly. What a joke! What a grim travesty of humor . . .

I shuddered. I hated the very sound of that name now. Cheap—shoddy, a catch word for men to laugh at. Lucky Lilly, at the end of her biggest play!

Still moving mechanically, I put on a simple sports dress and stood looking down at the huge roll of bills. I hadn't counted it—and now I never would.

For a moment, I caught my breath. It was as if another Lilly was whispering to me that this money was mine, I'd won it. It would more than stake me for the season's play. No one knew I still had it, not even Terry. Tony was dead. I wouldn't have to keep on the job at the

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MY KISSES WEREN'T ENOUGH—

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Escort Club; I wouldn't have to do anything for a year or more. Lester had started with only fifty dollars. This was—thousands, and who was to know?

Then my brain cleared. I didn't want even to touch the money, let alone keep it. Lester's stammering words came back—*"Do you mind if I send for my wife?"*

His wife—that was where the money belonged, wasn't it? But—Terry had grimly warned me: "Keep out of this. Remember, you don't know anything about it; you weren't even there."

But I was already putting on my hat. With the money now packed tightly in a large envelope bearing Lester's name, I was on my way to his hotel. I wasn't figuring it out. Somehow I just knew that I must do this one decent thing—if there was any way I possibly could.

The clerk at the hotel knew me from past seasons. "Have a big day, Lil?" he grinned.

"The biggest ever," I tried to grin back, but I knew the smile was a twisted grimace. "Put this envelope in Lester Bemont's box. I missed him somehow after the races. It's the stake I won for him, I'll be wanting a receipt."

"I'll put it in the safe," the clerk said, making out the receipt. "Where is Mr. Bemont? His wife is here waiting for him."

"He went to dinner somewhere—after the races," I managed somehow to reply, and taking the receipt walked as steadily as I could toward the door.

Lester's wife would get the money now. I was glad. She'd be—needing it.

I DIDN'T try to stop my sobs as I drove back through the night toward Chula Vista. In less than a half hour I was there, stretched across the bed.

No matter whose bullet had killed him—Mexican, American, I knew as surely as if I had held the gun, that it had been only I who really was to blame for the shot. I had taken him there, and although in reality he was older than I, and the suggestion had been his, there was no way I could ease my conscience.

Then suddenly I knew—as keenly as if I had stood there in the paddock, that at last my luck had changed.

Lost it, and my job. I would have to hustle now to find a job because like every gambler, I hadn't a penny laid aside.

And Terry? He too, was lost to me. Terry who had pleaded with me not to go to Tony's tonight, and whose plea I had flung back in his face. He couldn't have stopped the raid, merely because his girl was there.

His girl—no, not any more. "Oh, Terry, Terry, darling, what have I done to us?" I had cried the words aloud and heard them answered.

"And it's plenty you've done," Terry said gruffly. The next moment he had lifted me up. I clung weakly to his huge, strong body. "Stop crying—the kid didn't die. We got him to the hospital in time, and they went for his wife. He'll be pulling through and probably thanking you for the lesson. There at the hotel I saw them giving his wife the envelope you'd brought over with the kid's dough. That was square of you, darlin', and braver than most. Do you suppose now we could be getting married in the mornin'?"

"Terry—you wouldn't—you couldn't—"

"And why not? With the nonsense knocked out, you'll be just the wife I'm needing to bring up those thirteen O'Malleys."

"Fourteen, Terry," I corrected softly. "Thirteen might not be so lucky."

● *"Gee, I'd hate to be you, Jocko! That get-up may be peachy for collecting pennies, but you couldn't hire me to wear it on a day like this. The prickly heat breaks right out on my neck to think of it!"*

● *"Boss won't let you take it off, eh? Well, that's life... many's the time I've been rammed into a sweater. Only thing makes 'em bearable is Johnson's Baby Powder. It always fixes those prickles!"*

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Chained by Her Caresses

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27]

thinking that it would be easy for me to like her too much. Not like her exactly, but want her, desire her—go mad with longing to possess her. And I wasn't forgetting yet that she was the wife of a man who had been more than a father to me; who loved and trusted us both.

"You're crazy, Sonia," I said roughly, and sat up straighter in my chair.

"Crazy—yes," she said softly. "Crazy about you, Larry— about the way your hair grows in a little peak on your forehead and the way you frown when you're thinking and the way your eyes smile when you're happy—but you know all that, don't you?" She was standing in front of me and I got slowly to my feet. "Kiss me, Larry, why don't you kiss me?"

I leaned over and brushed her cheek with my lips. "Like that—Auntie?" I asked, trying to keep my voice from shaking.

"That was very amusing," said Sonia, "but I don't think you feel that way about me now. Do you, Larry, do you?"

Sonia's cool fingers were sliding across my bare shoulders and chest and trailing slowly down my back. Cool, did I say? Along the trail of flesh she touched, I could feel my blood leap to instant flame. I put my hands behind my back and grinned down at her, but the muscles in my arms were tense.

"Now kiss me again like that," Sonia whispered mockingly, "if you can, Larry."

I couldn't stand it any longer. I doubt if any man could. With a gasp, I caught her in my arms, holding her warm, throbbing body close to me I could feel her heart pounding under the thin satin robe and I was savagely glad that I could arouse her like that. She tilted her head back and let me read the invitation—the promise in her eyes. Then I crushed my mouth down on hers.

Blindly I picked her up and carried her toward the bed. But apparently it was no part of her plan to do anything more than torment me then. Suddenly she made herself tense and heavy in my arms, so that I was forced to set her on her feet.

"Have you forgotten," said Sonia coldly, "that I am your uncle's wife?"

"Please, Sonia, you're driving me mad!" I whispered hoarsely. "I don't care about anything now—I want you . . ."

"Get out!" she snapped, her voice like a whip. My head was whirling with the surprise and shock of her sudden refusal. In an agony of frustration and hurt pride, I stumbled to the door. "I'm sorry," I mumbled bitterly, "but after all, you can't blame me for thinking you meant more than you did, Sonia." Then I sneaked out of her room like a whipped dog, hoping she hadn't noticed that my eyes were wet with tears.

I walked miles that night. I walked until every muscle in my body was an inindividual separate ache, and my head throbbed with weariness. But when I got home I couldn't sleep. I couldn't do anything but lie there restlessly, thinking of Sonia, hating her, wanting her—

I must have dozed finally, because I didn't hear the door open. But when I opened my eyes I saw Sonia standing beside my bed, just as I had seen her a hundred times in my dreams.

I was shaking as I sat in bed. "For heaven's sake, Sonia," I groaned, "don't torture me like this. Are you really there?"

She moved closer. Then she was in my arms.

I FELT pretty rotten next morning, knowing that I didn't love Sonia but had simply been attracted to her by some power that was apparently stronger than my will. And because of this strange attraction, this madness, I had betrayed my uncle, who loved me. It's useless now to say that I should have fought harder; that I yielded too easily to Sonia's desire and mine. Lord knows I've thought enough about it since, but I can only say that what happened that night simply had to happen because her will was stronger than mine. And she was more experienced, too; knew better than I how to take what she wanted.

I left the house early that morning, fully determined not to go back until late that night after Sonia had gone to bed. I couldn't face her. I was so ashamed that I didn't want to go anywhere where I might meet any of my friends, so I drove out into the country. A Minnesota landscape, basking in the heat of a July sun, is monotonous enough to be rather soothing. I covered a hundred miles without realizing how far I had gone. Then I stopped for gas, had lunch and then kept going until mid-afternoon. When I figured that it would take me enough time to get back so that I wouldn't find Sonia up, I turned the car and started slowly home.

Not slowly enough, I guess, because it was only eight o'clock when I got back and Sonia had waited dinner for me. She had a shaker of Martinis already mixed, and we drank three before we ate. She had some kind of a clinging green dress with very little top to it, and across one shoulder, instead of a strap, she had a band of real gardenias. I have never smelled gardenias since without remembering that hot summer night, and Sonia leaning across the candle-lit table to smile possessively at me. She had been so sure I would be back in time for dinner, even though I had not known it myself.

"Are you going out?" she asked when we had finished.

"Probably."

"I will be in my room all evening," she said softly, as I left the table.

I didn't answer her. What was the use of telling her that I had made up my mind not to go near that room again, when I knew that it would take every bit of courage and will-power I possessed to stay away? I had never in my life wanted anything as I wanted Sonia's kisses.

I think that was the longest evening I have ever endured. I was restless. I couldn't read; couldn't sit still or stand in one place or listen to music or talk coherently to anyone. I wandered around the house like a lost soul, trying to find something to do that would keep me from thinking. I knew there was a dance at the club, but just then I couldn't bear the thought of holding anyone but Sonia in my arms. My madness had progressed as far as that.

I snapped on the radio. A dance band in New York was going wild over a new "hot" song. In my present mood, its throbbing, passionate, jungle rhythm excited me almost beyond endurance. I turned it off and went into the library. That was where Uncle Ralph kept his liquor, and I thought a good stiff drink might steady my nerves.

It didn't though; it simply made me visualize Sonia more clearly as she had stood before me last night, with an invitation in her eyes and a promise on her lips. Everything I did, everything I saw, reminded me of her.

It was sheer torture. I was torn between loyalty to the man who had been more than a father to me and desire for Sonia. Desire, did I say? Every nerve, every drop of blood in my body cried out for her. She was fever in my veins; she was fire against my flesh and madness in my heart. She was the beginning and end of all desire; to my adolescent, passion-inflamed mind it seemed that no one could ever again mean to me what she had on that first mad night.

It was after one o'clock when I acknowledged to myself that I was beaten. "Go to her, you fool," I thought savagely. "No one need ever know—"

She opened the door softly at my quiet knock, glancing swiftly at my haggard face and at my eyes that must have looked like burned holes in paper. She must have known instantly that she had won. And I felt no shame, no stab of conscience, nothing but ecstasy as I took her roughly in my arms.

I REALIZE now what a kid I must have seemed to Sonia, and how it must have amused her to have me jumping through hoops for her. She was smart enough then, though, to make me feel that the whole thing was my idea and that she was yielding merely because she couldn't resist me, the fierce conquering male. Oh, she knew how to handle men, all right!

She did give me five perfect days, though. Even now, after all that has happened, I have to thank her for showing me that passion is a beautiful and natural thing, not hideous and shameful as some people try to make it. If only she hadn't been the wrong woman to teach me that!

I was with Sonia when Uncle Ralph's telegram came. I was lying across her bed, idly watching her as she dressed for dinner. She was putting little dabs of perfume behind her ears when we heard Hilda's lumbering step in the hall.

I could feel myself getting cold all over as I waited for her to knock. Perhaps she saw me come in here, I thought, terrified. Perhaps she'll tell on us! For the first time in all those five days I began to realize what a dreadful thing we were doing, and I was afraid.

Sonia wasn't even nervous as she asked Hilda what she wanted. Or if she was, it didn't show.

"Telegram, Mrs. Porter," said Hilda stolidly.

She glanced at me. "Put it under the door, please." As she tore the yellow envelope open, however, I saw that her hands were shaking. She stared at the thin sheet and let it flutter to the bed, motioning me to read it:

RETURNING THURSDAY 7 A. M. HAVE LARRY MEET ME. LOVE. RALPH.

It was the first time in my life that I was sorry that my uncle was coming home. I was both sorry and ashamed.

"Before you say anything, Sonia," I began, "I want to tell you that we'll be married as soon as you can get your divorce. That is—if you will marry me."

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"What divorce?" said Sonia.

I hesitated. "Well, of course, we'll have to tell Ralph as soon as he gets here tomorrow. And after he knows, we can't stay here. I have"—I choked over the words—"I have a little money that my parents left me; enough to see you through while you're in Reno and to keep us while I'm looking for a job."

Sonia selected a cigarette and lit it carefully. Then she sat back in her chair, watching the smoke swirl lazily around her head. "Do you think it will make your uncle very happy to know that his wife and his nephew are—lovers?"

"It will kill him," I said miserably. "Ralph's the most honorable man I know, and he can't bear to think that everybody else isn't the same. Especially me."

"Then why tell him?"

I stared, not believing that I had heard her right. "You mean—just go on as though nothing had happened? I couldn't do that and I don't think you could, either. Oh, Sonia, why didn't we think of all this on that first miserable night?"

"Miserable?" Sonia repeated. "Larry, you darling fool, you utterly naive child, do you mean to say that you still don't know why I married your uncle?"

"I had hoped," I said carefully, "that it was because you loved him."

"Love?" She shivered. "Your uncle is an old man, Larry. His hands are clammy when he touches me and his kisses revolt me. Don't you know why I married him—can't you guess?"

Wordlessly I stared at her, held spellbound by the passionate glitter in her eyes. She was shaking with excitement.

"Do you remember the first time I saw you last winter in the drug store?"

I nodded, not daring to speak.

"Didn't you know then, as I did, that you and I were meant to be lovers? When our eyes met, didn't you feel that blinding surge of desire; that mad, sweet longing for my kisses and my caresses—as I wanted yours, Larry?"

Nobody had ever talked to me like that. I mumbled something in an agony of embarrassment, wishing she'd stop this merciless probing into our emotions.

"Well!" she shrugged. "I've had lovers before—plenty of them—but they didn't mean anything. My life was very empty until I saw you. And I made up my mind that day that I would meet you somehow and make you want me, too."

"Where does my uncle come in?" I rasped.

She shrugged. "You were years younger than I. I knew that you wouldn't willingly think of me that way; that you would deny the impulse that would bring you to me. So I married your uncle deliberately simply to be near you—to live under the same roof with you. Now do you understand?"

I hadn't known there were women like that; so passionate, so willful, that they would go to any reckless lengths and, if necessary, ruin any number of lives to get what they wanted. I shivered, wishing desperately that I could find some way out of the whole ghastly muddle.

"You aren't real," I groaned. "You're something I invented." Sonia smiled, flattered. But I hadn't meant it as a compliment.

I've thought it all out a thousand times since. I've lived over every moment of that scene and I've wished desperately that I had given Sonia up that night, for even after all that had already passed between us, I still would have spared my loved ones a lot of needless suffering, if I had broken with Sonia then.

WELL, my uncle came home next morning and I kept my mouth shut. I met him just as though nothing had happened. I even shook hands with him; as though I had a right ever to take his hand again! I had been a decent, straightforward youngster but in my moments of honesty I despised myself because I was now a cowardly weakling. But try as I did, I couldn't shake off her spell.

Sonia was my mistress for half a year. And my uncle was so crazy about her that he overlooked a lot of little things that should have made him suspicious of what was going on. But then, he was trusting. He had a disconcerting habit of believing what people told him.

Sonia wouldn't break off our affair and, to be honest, perhaps I didn't want her to—most of the time—for she never lost her power to thrill me to the very soul. But in my heart it all made me feel so despicably low; like something slimy that crawls under a rock. And when I finally found courage to demand a release from this unbearable state of affairs it was—too late.

I GUESS I haven't mentioned that my uncle's business was the manufacture of work shirts and overalls. Nothing very exciting about that, is there? But he kept three hundred people working all during the depression, and pretty well managed to keep our little town off the rocks. The summer after I graduated, he gave me a job with him—at the bottom.

"When I say I'm going to start you at the bottom, my boy," he had told me, "I don't mean that I'm going to put you to work sewing on pants buttons. But you are going to start in the office at twenty-five a week, and by Heaven, you'll stay there until you're worth more. By the time you take over the business, you'll *know* the business!"

He had been advancing me slowly but steadily ever since and on this particular Saturday afternoon in December I left the office with a forty-dollar pay envelope in my pocket. I was pretty proud of it, too, because I knew that I had earned every cent of it. On my way home I stopped in the drug store for some cigarettes and I met the girl who was to mean my whole life. Her name was Mary Slocum.

Mary and I had gone to school together. I had carried her books when we went to grade school and taken her to parties and dances when we were in High. Then she went East to school and I went to Minnesota U and we sort of lost track of each other.

Until I saw her that day, sitting at the soda fountain with Red Hecker, I had forgotten how honest a girl's eyes could be; or how tantalizingly sweet the curve of a girl's warm, fresh mouth, the clean, rounded line of chin and throat. In fact, I had forgotten about everything young and sweet until Mary made me remember.

She swung around on the fountain stool, facing me. "Hi, you old reprobate!" said Mary, joyously.

As remembrance came to me, my heart began to beat faster with happiness. "Well, if it isn't the ugly duckling! All grown up and swanky. Why, Mary, what did you do about all those freckles?"

"Had 'em burned off," she grinned. "Have a malted. Red's buying." She nudged him with a casual elbow.

"Hi, Larry," said Red, getting reluctantly to his feet. "How've you been? Haven't seen you around with the gang much lately."

I shook hands without enthusiasm and we measured each other. I had never liked him; and now, seeing him with Mary and knowing that I had no right to resent it, I liked him less than ever.

"Stick around, boy," he said, when we had found seats. "I think you're just in time to congratulate me. Mary was about to say 'yes' when you came in."

"Not so fast there, my sweet," she laughed. "I *was* thinking of letting Red make an honest woman of me, after all these years," she told me confidingly, "but now that I've seen you, Larry, I think I'll wait."

"Who knows?" I said lightly, "I might even be cajoled into marrying you myself, my pretty maid." We all laughed, but the sight of Mary's flushed face and suddenly starry eyes made my breath quicken and my pulses race. If only I had waited, I thought desperately, for someone like her! Someone young and sweet and precious.

When I left them, I had a date with Mary for Wednesday night. I whistled all the way home, trying to get up courage enough to face Sonia. I had a queer feeling that she would know just by looking at me that I had changed; that I wanted to give her up.

It was a tremendous relief to come home that night and find that she didn't even notice me. Not then or for weeks afterward. She treated me with the detached politeness one offers any casual acquaintance. I was plenty glad, but I was curious, too. It wasn't like her to give up something she wanted without a struggle—Finally, I decided that she was ill or that she no longer wanted me.

She certainly looked ill; sort of haggard and wretched, and strangely gentle even when she spoke to the help. She was so sweet to my uncle, and he was so pitifully grateful for her least kindness, that watching him, my heart almost broke because I realized for the first time that he really loved her.

I lived in a fool's paradise for those few weeks. In spite of my worry and regret because of Sonia, I couldn't help being happy when I was with Mary. She stopped seeing Hecker altogether; and though she was as direct and friendly as a boy and had never even permitted me to kiss her, she let me know in a thousand dear ways that she cared for me. How perfect it would have been, if only I hadn't spoiled everything!

IT WAS inevitable that sooner or later Sonia and I would have a show-down. I was even anxious for it, but when it came, I walked into it blindly, without any preparation. Not that all the preparation in the world could have helped me that night.

Mary and I had danced late. I got home at four o'clock Sunday morning and found Sonia waiting for me in the library. She was quiet—dangerously quiet—as she waited for me to mix and drink a highball. Her face looked yellow and pinched in the shaded light of a table lamp and her feverish, burning eyes never left my face. She almost drove me crazy, staring at me like that and refusing to drink with me. I finished my drink in a couple of gulps and motioned toward the light. "Shall I leave this on for you?" I asked hopefully.

"No. I'm going with you." Her voice promised trouble. I shrugged and started upstairs, with Sonia at my heels. She followed me right to my room, closing the door carefully after her.

"Wouldn't it be just dandy," I said bitterly, "if my uncle should find you here?"

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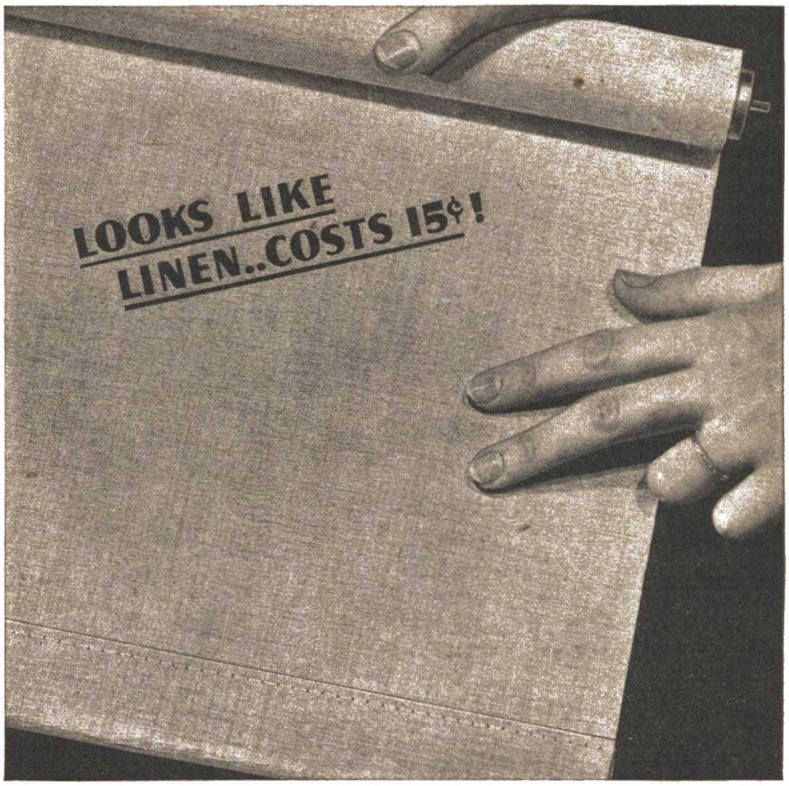

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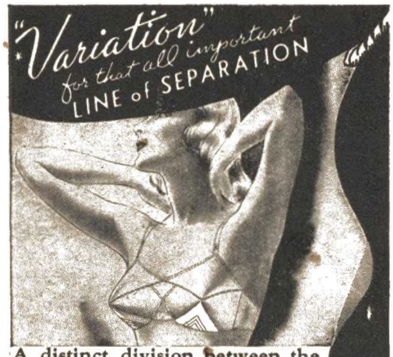

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"Isn't it a little late to be worrying about that?" she asked, reasonably enough. "You never seemed to be so terribly concerned before."

I didn't answer her. There was nothing I could say. Finally her questioning eyes left my face, darting restlessly around the room. Suddenly I saw her stiffen. I followed her glance and saw with a start that Mary's picture, a large autographed one, was smiling at her from my dresser.

"Who is she, Larry?"

I squared my shoulders and took a deep breath. "The girl I'm going to marry," I said firmly. And waited for the storm to break.

But there wasn't any; at least, not right away. Sonia's voice was quiet when she finally spoke—too quiet, as I should have known.

"The girl you are going to marry," she repeated, thoughtfully. And then she let me have it—right where it hurt. "Larry, has it ever occurred to you that I might not want you to marry?"

I HAD expected to battle tears, pleading, accusations—anything but this high-handed certainty. Her coolness in taking me entirely for granted drove me wild. I must have lost my head completely then, because what I said next certainly wasn't very diplomatic:

"What have you got to do with it?" I demanded brutally. "I guess I don't owe you anything, Sonia."

"Not even loyalty?" she questioned in a whisper. "But you can't leave me, Larry—you can't ever leave me now. I won't let you."

"I'm desperately sorry about our affair, Sonia," I told her then, more quietly, "but after all, you're a mature woman. You must have known as well as I that it couldn't last. And this other girl is my own age, my own sort of person; she's—well, she's the kind of girl a man wants to marry."

"Of course. And I am not," said Sonia gently. "But I won't let you go—not now or ever. Do you hear me?"

She lit a cigarette with hands that shook a little. "Because," she added, "I'm going to have a child."

The room was very still.

"Your child," said Sonia.

I think I went mad then. I know that I accused her of unspeakable things and that she didn't trouble to deny them. I even told her that she had planned this dreadful thing simply as a trap for me. She didn't say a word—just stood there calmly smoking, watching me.

Finally I gave up. "What are you going to do?" I asked wearily.

"That depends," said Sonia evenly, "on you. If you give this girl up, I will let your uncle believe the child is his. Otherwise I shall be forced to tell him the truth."

"If you tell my uncle now," I said desperately, "you will kill him. Please, Sonia, be generous."

"Generous?" Her face was twisted with rage and bitterness. "Why should I be generous—and give you to some other woman? No, Larry, I've always had to fight for what I wanted. I can fight to keep it, too. I have the first claim on you now because I need you. And I'll keep you on any terms." She walked to the door, opened it slowly. "Unless you want your uncle to die of grief and shame, you will tell this girl that you are not free to marry her."

I cried that night. The last night I had cried I was twelve when my dog had been run over and killed. But these were a man's tears, silent and terrible, and a man's hopeless grief. I am not ashamed of those tears—but I am sorry that they didn't leave me with the courage to face my problem honestly.

Because the next day I asked Mary to marry me. I didn't tell her about Sonia or explain why I wanted to keep our engagement secret. I asked my darling to share the muddle I had made of my life, without warning her what she would have to face. Only God knows how often—how many, many times—I have been bitterly sorry since that I wasn't brave enough to tell Mary everything and trust her to understand and forgive.

She took my ring. "Mrs. Lawrence Porter," she said softly, twisting the shining thing on her finger. "It's a name I've always liked the sound of, darling."

I kissed her then, kissed her until she clung to me breathless and shining-eyed, with her dear heart pounding madly against mine. "Mary," I whispered, mad with happiness, "oh, dearest, do you understand what these kisses do to us?"

She sat up suddenly, pushing me gently away from her. "You're not trying to teach me the facts of life, are you, dear?" She laughed shakily and began arranging her hair. "But maybe you'd better take me home now, because I love you so much that anything's liable to happen—and I'd like to have that white wedding veil mean something."

Mother of God, I prayed, keep her always like this, fine and sweet. Don't let her be hurt—

Only one thing stands out in my memory of the next four months. But that was important enough to make everything else seem insignificant. Sonia met Mary.

Looking back now, I can't understand why I wasn't more disturbed when she told us. I remember that the thought of those two together sickened me a little, but what a blind, stupid fool I was not to realize how dangerous it was to let them meet.

Sonia mentioned it casually at dinner one night. "Oh, by the way, I met that little girl friend of yours today, Larry."

"What's that?" My uncle looked up with interest. "Girl friend? Who d'you mean, Sonia?"

"Mary Slocum," I explained, outwardly calm. "You remember, Unk, I used to go to school with her."

Sonia's burning eyes met mine. I wondered how my uncle could help noticing the tenseness of her somber face. "Oh, yes, of course," he said warmly. "Nick Slocum's kid. Nice little girl, Larry. Ask her to dinner some night."

Uncle Ralph always talked vaguely about having some of my friends to dinner and then immediately forgot all about it. But Sonia took him up on it. "Would Saturday night be convenient for you both?" she asked me.

"Sure, that's right," my uncle agreed comfortably. "Bring her over, my boy. It won't hurt you youngsters to spend a quiet evening at home with us old folks."

Sonia's face wasn't a pretty thing to see in that instant before she got control of her emotions. I could see how much that 'old folks' crack had shaken her.

What a fool I was to take Mary to that house! Or to think, as I did, that Sonia might have relented and was prepared to pat us both on the head with a benign "Bless you, my children." She just wasn't made that way.

I could see Uncle Ralph liked Mary as I made the introductions. "Uncle Ralph, this is Mary Slocum, the girl I'm going to marry," I said. Sonia had barely acknowledged the introduction and, to me, the air seemed tense with her smouldering rage.

Suddenly Sonia asked, "When are you children planning on getting married?"

Mary said happily, "We haven't made any definite plans, but soon—I hope."

She stopped, evidently feeling the sudden tenseness in the air. Her eyes traveled from my stricken face to Sonia's that was dark with passion. There was a long moment of confused silence.

"What's the matter?" Mary asked me. making a brave attempt to be flippant, "Have I talked out of turn or something?"

"Of course not, dear child," Sonia murmured smoothly. "I'm glad you told us. And I wish you both all the happiness you deserve." As we walked towards the dining room, Sonia said casually, "Would you care to have luncheon with me some day next week? At some quiet place out of town." Her smile apologized for her slow, ungainly figure. "You see, I don't like to be seen in crowded places just now."

I stood there helplessly while Mary, obviously pleased at the invitation, made a date for the following Wednesday to drive with Sonia to Belmont, about fifty miles away. Something warned me not to let her go—to make any excuse that would keep her from seeing Sonia alone. Partly it was fear of what she could tell her, I suppose; but there was something else, too. Some heavy foreboding that hung like a black cloud before my eyes and made my heart feel like lead in my chest. But what could I say? What reasonable excuse could I offer? I couldn't very well discourage Mary from being friends with Sonia when I knew she was doing it in order to become one of the family. That was the heartbreakingly funny part of it.

Oh, I tried to talk her out of going, but I had to be pretty cautious about what I said. And when she asked me why, I had no answer—none that I could put into words, anyway.

BY TUESDAY night I couldn't even sleep. I lay in bed, staring helplessly at the ceiling. By this time tomorrow, I thought, Mary will know what a rat I am. I wish something—anything would happen to keep her from finding out.

I fell asleep towards morning and woke to find Sonia beside my bed, just as I had found her a hundred times before. But it wasn't passion or desire for each other that brought us together that night. There was something like hate in our eyes as we faced each other in the grim, pale light of early morning.

Sonia sat down heavily on the side of my bed. "I wanted to see you alone just once more, Larry," she began. "Perhaps if we talk this thing over sensibly, we can find some way out for all of us."

My heart was suddenly lighter. Her words were vaguely comforting. And then all at once I found myself being terribly sorry for Sonia. She looked so old and beaten sitting there—so different from the woman I had found so infinitely desirable.

"I wish we could, Sonia," I said earnestly. "There's no sense in either of us being more miserable than we can help."

"What would you suggest?"

I hesitated. "Let me go," I pleaded. "You've had me dangling on a string for almost a year. Now we've both got to pay for it in our own way. Let's make it the easiest way for everybody."

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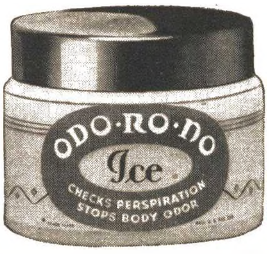

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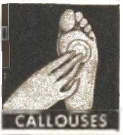
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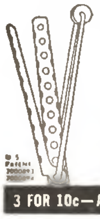

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"Let you go?" Sonia laughed shortly. "Never. I said I'd fight to keep you, Larry, and I meant it."

"Then what can we do?" I cried helplessly. "I can't go on like this much longer. You and I have got to have some understanding—we've got to get things settled somehow."

"I'm still waiting for you to suggest something reasonable."

"All right, then—get this!" I shouted. "A long time ago I offered to tell my uncle everything and marry you. I was trying to do the right thing as I saw it. But you wanted to eat your cake and have it, too. Well, it's too late to tell him now, and you might as well realize that you and I are through."

"But if I told you that I had changed my mind, Larry; if I said I was willing to get a divorce and marry you now, what would you do then?"

I tried to speak and faltered as my eyes met Mary's smiling pictured ones. Sonia followed my wavering glance and her face darkened. "That's your answer, is it?" she said grimly. "You're tired of me and now you think all you have to do is throw me over and marry this little innocent. But we're not through yet, young man! Wait till I finish with your little girl friend tomorrow." She turned to the door. "And remember, you have nobody but yourself to blame for whatever happens."

When my uncle and I left for the office that morning, Sonia was already gone. I was plenty nervous during that short drive to the factory and it was worse when I got behind my desk. "I wonder if she's told Mary yet," I kept thinking. "I wonder if Mary knows." Over and over, till my head throbbed like a drum and my eyes ached from staring fixedly at nothing.

At eleven o'clock my uncle staggered into my office. His face was so white that I thought he was ill, and I jumped to help him. He sank into a chair as though his knees had turned to water.

"Sonia's hurt," he gasped in a hoarse whisper. "There's been an accident, Larry, on Devil's Elbow, just outside of Belmont. I—I've got to get right out there—"

I was stunned. For a full moment my heart seemed to stop beating as I stared at my uncle's ghastly face. "Was she—alone?" I whispered when I could find my voice.

His head jerked back and I could see tears squeezing slowly from under his lids. "I'm afraid Mary was with her, too, my boy," he said gently.

"Then let's get started!" I shouted. "Don't sit there looking like they were dead or something, Uncle Ralph, come on!"

We made the trip to Belmont behind two motorcycle policemen. When we got to Devil's Elbow and saw where Sonia's car had left the road and hurtled through the fence into the dry river bed forty feet below, I thought I would faint with horror. If either of them is alive after that, I thought desperately, it's only by a miracle. I didn't dare let myself think of my little baby, that Sonia was to have borne in less than a month.

We pulled up in front of the little hospital and rushed immediately to the reception desk. The head doctor's face told us better than words that we were too late.

"Mrs. Porter died on the operating table not ten minutes ago," he said gravely. "Miss Slocum had to have an emergency operation also, but she has an even chance of recovering."

I had been steeling myself to hear something like that all during the drive, but when it came, it was only the sight of my uncle's stricken face that kept me up.

"The baby lived," the doctor added as if he hoped this might lighten our grief. "A fine, seven-pound boy, and God alone knows how we managed to save it."

Later, since we weren't yet allowed to see Mary, we stood before the window of the nursery, waiting anxiously for the white-masked nurse to let us see the tiny form that lay in one of the prim little row of beds. She held the blanket away for a moment and I looked for the first time at the face of my little son. He looked to me like an angel, with his tiny face puckered up in sleep, his unbelievable tiny fists clenched beside his cheek.

If you have a kid of your own, you'll know how I felt as I stood there staring at my little son. That strange mixture of pride and reverence that any man feels when he is permitted to look for the first time at the little life he has helped to create. My eyes were misty and the strange, awed beating of my heart almost choked me.

My uncle sighed and touched my arm. "He looks just like you did when you were a baby, Larry," he said proudly, and the spell was broken. I remembered bitterly that I could never, under any circumstances, acknowledge this precious son of mine.

I faced my uncle with tears in my eyes. "It's terrible about Sonia, Uncle Ralph," I gulped. "But at least you have the kid to remember her by. He sure is a healthy looking youngster."

And with my good wishes to my uncle went the renunciation of my son.

MARY lived. And after awhile they let me see her every day, but only for a few minutes at a time. She never urged me to stay, or seemed very sorry when I left. Gradually, but nevertheless painfully, I got used to the idea that she knew all about Sonia and me; that she was only waiting until she was stronger to break it to me gently.

I came in one day with an armful of flowers, to find her dressed and sitting in a wheel chair. "Mary! Mary, darling!" I cried. "Gosh, it's good to see you up again! How does it feel to be—"

She stopped me with a gesture. "If I give your ring back, Larry," she said quietly, "will you just take it and go away without asking any questions?"

"Maybe I know what you're going to say," I told her desperately, "but I've got to hear you say it just the same. Did Sonia—"

"Sonia?" Her eyes widened. "She has nothing to do with it! Oh, I suppose the accident in a way was her fault—everyone says so—but I never blamed her for a minute in my heart for—this." She was crying quietly now. "I'll walk again after awhile, Larry, but the doctor says I'll never be able to have a child. And how could I marry you, knowing I can never bear you a child. . . ."

Without letting her finish what she was telling me, I knelt before her and buried my face in her cool hands, and my own warm tears mingled with hers.

Sonia hadn't told her about us after all. She had planned an even more awful vengeance. *She had purposely driven the car off the road!* She planned to kill Mary and herself because in her twisted mind she rather would have died and have killed the girl I love, than give me up!

Mary and I were married very quietly, as soon afterwards as was decently possible. We went to live with my uncle and little David in the big house that had seemed so lonesome before.

The baby is the best and sweetest little kid in the world and Mary adores him. No one could help loving the little fellow, but of course he means more to Mary because she can never have a baby of her own.

My uncle never got over Sonia's death. Her room is a shrine in the house and he worship her memory. Sometimes at night I almost go mad thinking about the whole incredible muddle, and then I have to resist an almost overpowering impulse to awake my uncle and Mary and shout the truth at them. But, of course, I never shall.

I listen to his praise of Sonia and I murmur words of agreement. I watch his face and how it glows with pleasure when he holds the baby—his son.

This is my punishment. This I must bear—without wincing or complaint. This is the price for my cowardice.

I've thought it out a thousand times, and I firmly believe that this is one time when I could ease my conscience only at the cost of my dear ones' happiness.

I'll never tell them, so help me God. I'll just try to make it up to them by making them as happy as I can.

I Want To Leave My Husband

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18]

tell him if I ever drink tea. I like to wear rather bright colors, since I am a vivid brunette, but Don has decided that pastel shades, which put me out like a candle with the extinguisher on, suit me best. So I have to wear nothing but pastels. I like my hair short—Don makes me wear it long. I love to drive the car and had driven for years before my marriage. Don has made up his mind, however, that I am not a good driver, and I haven't been behind a wheel for three years.

I could go on forever, multiplying instances like these. Their name is legion. None of them sound very big or very terrible. But all taken together, they are ruining my life. Every human soul needs a little freedom, a little room to grow and expand. Why, I can't even choose my own books or my own friends or the movies I go to see. And don't think because Don is at work during the day that he doesn't check up on me! The very cook in my house is practically a spy on me, and Don comes home at noon every day. Before he leaves in the morning he says kindly, "Now, my unsystematic darling, let's plan your day! You know if I didn't help you work out a schedule, you'd be a very idle little girl indeed, and we can't have that, can we?" So Don works out my schedule, and he finds out whether I've followed it, too.

Can I bring up a child under a domination like this? What sort of spiritless and negative little creature will it be? Indeed, am I not becoming a very spiritless and negative sort of creature myself? Don't I have to break away to keep my personality alive, to save my very soul, almost? And yet, on the face of it, to rob Don of his child and his wife seems criminal. What is the right course for me to take?

MARY'S HAD A BABY

We speak so blithely about the beauty of Motherhood!

And so little about its pain—dismissing it almost casually as the good news is passed around among relatives and friends:

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2. *Preparing for Motherhood.*
3. *Approaching "Middle Age."*

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My Kisses Were Sold For Fame

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36]

packing box and offered me the rest of its surface.

Gingerly, I sat down beside him. The nearness of this man disturbed me. I recognized his charm, his potential dangerousness and it made me nervous. I wasn't dumb by any means and I knew that when a man like Bill Maylor, with every girl in town chasing him, began to show interest in a girl like Carola Rand—well, it meant a lot of heartaches for Carola Rand, if she didn't watch her step.

"So you intend to get some place in the world, eh?" asked the man, conversationally. He took out a package of cigarets and offered me one. I shook my head and answered his question curtly: "Sure, I do. I've lived on the wrong side of the tracks all my life. If I stay in this town, I'll keep on living there. I'll marry a guy that's always lived there and I'll raise kids that will always live there . . . and that's not my idea of a good time. I want to see things before I die and have swell clothes and some of the things that make life easier."

Bill Maylor exhaled a cloud of smoke and his grey eyes gazed at me speculatively through the haze.

"Well," he mused, "you've got what it takes all right. Blue eyes that are almost green and a lot of red hair combined with a skin like yours never hurt any woman's chances of getting some place if she really wanted to. You've got spunk, too. What's your name?"

I told him. Somehow his remarks about my looks were reassuring. I had figured that I wasn't bad-looking and some of the boys at school and the fellows around the town had showed signs of agreeing with me—but they hadn't had what I wanted, so I'd passed up their advances.

This was different. This man had been to Europe. He'd seen women all over the world. He knew his way around. And he'd said I had what it took!

"And you're interested in flying," prompted Bill Maylor. "Why?"

My eyes grew dreamy. "Oh, it must be wonderful to be clear up there away from everything," I said, wistfully. "It must make you feel sort of detached and superior.

"And besides," I added, practically. "There's more possibilities in flying than anything else. Especially for a woman. A woman flier is accepted any place, after she gets well-known. It doesn't make any difference where she came from—people think she's the tops. She gets chances to go into the movies or to make personal appearances. Stores ask her to pose for clothes and endorse face-creams. All she needs to do is get herself across by doing something spectacular."

"Got it all figured out, haven't you?" Bill Maylor asked, mockingly.

"You bet I have," I agreed, somberly. "And that's why I'm going to learn how to fly or bust!"

"I'm for you, kid," he grinned and getting to his feet, held out his hand. "I like to see an ambitious gal get along. So come over early every morning. Around six, say! I'll teach you to fly on my own 'plane."

"Do you really mean it?" I gasped. "You're not kidding?"

"I really mean it," he vowed, solemnly, his grey eyes dark and opaque and expressionless. "I'm not kidding."

It was silly, of course, but I felt the hot tears rushing to my eyes. I blinked them back, angrily. I mustn't go soft now that I was on the first step of the ladder of my ambition. But it was all so sudden. So startling!

I had always known that some day I was going to learn how to fly, but I hadn't quite figured out how it would come to pass. Well, this was it! Bill Maylor, the famous Army flier, was going to teach me! It seemed like some wonderful dream.

IN THE days that followed, it seemed more and more dream-like. I was up at four-thirty every morning, helping my mother get the clothes ready for the boiler—she still washed for the people on the "right side of the tracks." I'd mix the starch and the bluing; help get breakfast for my father and two brothers and then I would trudge the two and half dusty miles to the airport.

The only part of the day that seemed real to me were those hours I spent in the air with Bill Maylor.

I learned astonishingly fast for a woman, he told me. I not only knew the mechanical motions of flying but I was picking up a great deal about the technical and engineering end of it, too.

I learned to read the altimeter, the magnetic compass and the earth inductor compass. I learned to bring the plane out of a spin. I learned to make a three point landing and a dead-stick landing. I learned to take off smoothly and to loop and dive and stunts which few women have tackled.

I wasn't a woman up in the air. I wasn't even a girl with red hair and blue eyes and a skin as smooth as a gardenia petal. I was an automaton following Bill Maylor's harsh, impersonal orders with unfailing and unfearing accuracy.

But on the ground, I was just a girl again. A girl who had fallen a victim to Bill Maylor's indisputable charm.

At first I had been grateful to him to the point of worship. This was the man who was helping me make all my dreams come true. Then I began to discover that beneath the good-looking exterior of Lieutenant William Maylor, with his impudent, cynical slight smile and his reputation for dangerous sophistication, there was a man, simple and direct and likeable.

And swiftly it had become so much more than liking—it was love, breathtaking in its sharp sweetness.

He was thirty-three and I was nineteen. A dangerous nineteen which knew too much and too little. I think he began to realize that my surface hardness and ambition was cracking and that I was going off the deep end about him. I suppose he was used to it. He was too handsome. Too many women had loved him already.

One morning, after our lesson, when we had brought the plane down and were swinging across the field, he asked idly: "What do you do with yourself all day and every night, Carol?"

"After I go home from here," I answered, succinctly, "I help Mother get the clothes on the line. She runs a home laundry, y'know. In the afternoon I help her iron. In my spare time I read the aviation books you've loaned me and at eight o'clock I go to bed so that I'll be able to get up at four-thirty again."

"Lord, what a life!" he exclaimed. "No dates? With a face and figure like yours? Whew!"

"I told you about that once," I reminded him sullenly. "I don't want the kind of dates this town can give me. The fellows from the good families would take me someplace where nobody would see them and expect to make passes at me. The other kind of fellows aren't worth bothering about. That's why I want to get to be somebody."

He eyed me thoughtfully. "Come on over to my dump and get a bite of breakfast," he suggested. "We've got to talk about doing something about this ambition of yours."

I nodded my head, carelessly.

I mustn't let him see, I thought wisely, how his casual invitation thrilled me. To actually see the inside of the small bungalow on the edge of the field where he had his bachelor quarters! I had hoped and prayed that some day he might ask me there. Then, when I dreamed about him over my books at night, I would be able to see him in his real setting.

Eagerly I followed him across the field and, as he threw open the door of his house and waited for me to enter, I was sure that he must be able to hear the wild beating of my heart.

"Hi, Sing," he called as he closed the door behind us, "we've got company for breakfast!"

A weazoned, ancient Chinaman came from the kitchen and regarded us phlegmatically.

"Carola," announced Lieutenant Maylor, "this is Sing Lee. I found him in a flood right after the war and he's been with me ever since. He's the swellest cook and lousiest housekeeper that ever walked the earth, but I wouldn't know what to do without him. Sing, this is Miss Carola Rand who is going to be the world's most famous lady flier. Now rustle us some breakfast before I wring your neck."

"Bleakfast be leady when leady an' not until," Sing Lee declared imperturbably and disappeared into his kitchen.

Bill and I looked at each other and laughed.

"Oh, well," he shrugged. "I'm in no hurry if you aren't. Want to see the rest of the house?"

"I'd love it," I answered.

This was a new and thrilling experience and I didn't want to miss a minute or an inch of it.

There wasn't much to see in the house, however. Just a typical bachelor's house. A little bit bare in spots, a little bit cluttered in spots and dust an inch thick on everything. There were glass rims on all the tables and cigaret burns in the carpets. There were empty bottles here and there and a great many pictures of pretty girls on the walls.

I hated those pictures. I hated every girl Bill Maylor had ever known and loved—and I knew there had been plenty of them. It was my first feeling of jealousy and it swept over me like a burning wave.

When he showed me his bedroom I looked at the photographs that lined the walls with scornful eyes.

"To Bill—love forever," I read aloud, disdainfully. "To Bill, in sweet remembrance!"

"You certainly have a right to your reputation as a heart-breaker," I taunted.

"Such praise must be deserved," he

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quoted lightly. "After all, my child, it takes years and years to build up a reputation like that."

"I suppose you taught them all to fly!" I flamed.

"No," he answered, mildly. "On the contrary, you're the first girl I ever took that much interest in."

His eyes considered me, faintly mocking, faintly laughing, lazily dangerous. "As a matter of fact," he added, "You're the first pretty girl I've ever been around for this long a time without kissing."

I didn't answer him. I fumbled with the picture frames of those other girls. The dark Mary, the blond Tess, the laughing Gabrielle, the haughty Marianne. There was a dull, strange ache in my heart. I wished frantically that I hadn't come home with him. Hadn't seen these pictures of the girls Bill Maylor had kissed.

And then he was saying in my ear: "I ought to do something about that, Carola. I shouldn't break my record that way."

I felt his arms go around my slim waist. He tilted my head back against his shoulder and very slowly, very deliberately and completely his mouth descended upon mine. I was briefly conscious of his bronzed face against my own, of his grey eyes that looked into mine and laughed, and then my eyelids closed. . . .

I COULD feel him pushing me back toward the bed and sinking down upon it, pulling me with him—but I didn't care. There had never been such heavenly ecstasy as the feeling of his arms around me and his lips, first on my mouth, then up my cheek and down into the soft curve of my throat and back to my mouth again.

"Carola, baby," he whispered, huskily, "what makes you so sweet? I didn't mean to do this, child! I'll swear I didn't. I only meant to kiss that scornful, crimson young mouth of yours and let you go—but now I can't! I can't stop, Carola. You're like a madness in my blood!"

"Don't stop," I whispered. "Don't stop . . . . I'm mad too, and I don't care! . . . . I guess I always wanted to be mad this way. . . ."

Nothing mattered. Nothing but the touch of his lips. This was why I hadn't wanted dates with the boys in the town—this was the thing I had been waiting for. This, then was love. This trembling ecstasy in a man's arms, the sweetness of my mouth under a man's mouth. The utter surrender of mind, spirit and body. . .

Somewhere in the distance, Sing Lee pounded lustily on a Chinese dinner gong.

Lieutenant William Maylor lifted his head from the soft hollow of my shoulder. Then he sat up and ran his hand through the crisp waves of his black hair.

"Breakfast must be ready," he said, awkwardly, and didn't meet my eyes.

"It—it—must be," I stammered and struggled to my feet.

"I—I'm sorry, Carola," the man muttered. "I didn't mean anything like that to happen."

I laughed hysterically. "That's all right," I gasped. "It was just as much my fault as yours. I—I didn't fight very hard."

He came over and put his hands on my shoulders. "You're a good sport, honey," he said, his voice shaken, his eyes relieved. "I—I thought you might go feminine and reproachful on me."

I lifted my chin bravely. "Why should I?" I asked, jauntily. "I—I'll put it down to part of my flying lessons."

He laughed, lifted my chin and kissed me fleetingly on the mouth.

I wanted to cling to him and bury my frightened face against his shoulder. I didn't feel jaunty or like a good sport. I felt like a terrified child lost in the dark and needing an older person's hand for courage and guidance. I wanted to cry and I wanted to be comforted and told that everything was going to be all right.

Instead, I combed my disheveled hair and washed my flushed face in front of the glass in the bathroom that adjoined Bill's bedroom. Then I followed him into the dining room where Sing Lee served us man-sized stacks of wheat-cakes and huge sausage cakes with steaming coffee and rich cream.

Wide-eyed I watched Bill Maylor eat his breakfast with masculine enthusiasm. I couldn't choke down a thing but a few gulps of coffee. I tried to talk when he talked and laugh when he laughed, but I was glad when breakfast was over.

For me, the whole world had changed—but evidently nothing had changed for Lieutenant William Maylor.

He offered to drive me home before he went over to the hangars.

"No thanks," I told him, dully. "I—I need the walk."

He paused at the door and took me into his arms again. "You're sweet, Carola," he whispered, huskily. "I hadn't realized how sweet you were. Not sorry are you?"

"Of course not," I answered, valiantly.

"'At a girl," he grinned. "Well, goodbye, darling. See you tomorrow morning at the usual time."

And that was that to Lieutenant Maylor. Another victory of love. An easy victory at that!

Oh, how I hated myself! I had known so definitely what I wanted from life. I had prided myself on being so hard-boiled and level-headed. And at the first touch of experienced lips I had let myself go completely.

I hated myself still more in the days that followed. I still went to the airport for my lessons and there were other mornings like the first one in Bill's bungalow.

I knew that I loved him and I also knew that to him I was just another girl who had given herself to him. It would be ridiculous for me to expect him to marry me.

And yet, humbly, one day, I asked him if he would.

"I—I'm not going to be able to go on much longer," I told him, hesitantly. "People will begin to notice."

His eyes were wide and horror-stricken and his handsome face was pale beneath its bronze.

"My Lord!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't you tell me sooner, child? God, what a mess!"

I couldn't answer him. Suddenly I hated myself, but mostly I hated him.

He paced the floor distractedly. "I'm sorry, Carola," he said at length. "God knows how sorry! I—I didn't know what I thought. I guess I took it for granted you knew your way around—knew how to take care of yourself. You were always so sure of yourself, so definite in your knowledge of what you wanted of your life. I took that surface sophistication of yours at its face value and thought you knew what you were doing!"

"Yes," I muttered, bitterly, "I was always sure of myself all right—and I knew what I wanted to make of my life, too. And now look at me!"

I laughed hysterically. "The hard-boiled kid from across the tracks who was going to go places and do things!" I gibed. "That was me.

"Now where am I going to go and what am I going to do?" I ended wildly.

"Be still!" Bill Maylor commanded me stern and white-lipped. He took my hands in his. "Be still," he repeated, "and listen to me.

"I can't marry you, Carola. I would if I could and that's straight. But I can't! I've been married for years. Ever since the year I came back from the war! She was an Army widow, older than I and with plenty of money and sex-appeal. She tried to run my life and career and I walked out on her. Well, she wouldn't give me a divorce and I had no grounds to get one on my own hook. I didn't want one anyhow. I was through with marriage. Through with being tied to a woman's apron strings.

"Lord knows I've given her plenty of cause to divorce me! But it hasn't seemed to bother her. She's content to stay in the background with her horses and her dogs and her racing cars and let me sow my wild oats as a bachelor. I guess she was as fed up on me as I was with her. But she won't divorce me! There's a stubborn streak in her that's going to hang on to the legal right to be Mrs. William Maylor for some crazy reason that no one knows."

I stared at him with one trembling hand pressed to my shaking mouth.

"Take it on the chin, Carola," I told myself. "You had it coming to you!"

I tried to laugh, but it wasn't much of a success. "Well," I said wearily, "that seems to be very definitely *that!*"

"You'll have to leave town," he planned, worriedly. "I can keep you going until after it's over and then we can decide what to do."

I couldn't look at him. I seemed to ache all over like someone who has just come out from under a local anesthetic. It hurts to have your heart torn out and squeezed dry of emotion. Hurts and yet is a welcome relief.

I had thought I was hard-boiled before. It had been a protective shell for my youth and inexperience. Now I knew that if I survived this, nothing could ever hurt me again. I would be as hard and cold and calculating in reality as I had tried to believe I was before.

I LEFT Westfield that week. I told my mother I had been offered a job as hostess on an airliner. She hated to see me leave but was glad that I was on the way of getting some place in my chosen career. So far my family hadn't suspected a thing. I promised to write often and send home part of my salary.

Bill had made arrangements for me to stay in a city about a hundred miles from Westfield. He figured that people were less curious in a city and I could find more things to amuse myself while I was waiting for the baby.

He didn't figure that I would have plenty of time to think, too. Time to think and brood and grow more bitter day by day.

Finally I made my decision. Life owed me some sort of compensation for this trick it had played on me and I was going to see that I got it!

I don't know what Bill thought about in those days. He sent me every cent of money he could spare but the few times he came to see me he was constrained and ill-at-ease and usually a little tight. Finally I asked him not to come any more and I think he was relieved.

And then one day I did the thing I had been contemplating. I sat down and wrote Bill's wife! Foolishly he had told me enough details for me to be able to locate her easily. She spent most of her time at her country estate in Virginia he had told me, so I sent the letter there.

I told her who I was and where I was and that I was expecting a child that would belong to her husband. I told her that it wouldn't make a pretty story if it were made public and I asked her what she was going to do about it.

After it was gone, I was frightened. And as the days went by I grew more and more sorry for the thing I had done. Perhaps she would do the thing that I had avoided—perhaps she would send the whole sordid story to Bill's superiors. I think I almost went crazy in those following weeks. I was so miserable and unhappy, anyhow. One moment I would hate Bill and not care what happened to him and the next moment I would be so lonesome for him that I wouldn't know what to do.

Some of the money he sent to me, I forwarded to my mother at the proper intervals with brave letters about how well I was doing in my new job and how I loved being an air hostess.

The rest of the time I tried to occupy

[*Please turn to page* 88]

YES, I'M STILL SINGLE
DO YOU LIKE TO BE SINGLE, MISS ELLEN?
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, JUDY, I DON'T! I'D LOVE TO HAVE A LITTLE GIRL LIKE YOU!
THEN WHY DON'T YOU DO WHAT MAMA SAID? SHE SAID YOU WOULDN'T STILL BE SINGLE IF YOU ASKED THE DENTIST ABOUT YOUR BREATH
MY BREATH! WHY, JUDY! IS THAT...
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THE COZY KITCHEN

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 52]

HERE are two inexpensive, yet delicious dishes that your family will love. Left—Beef stew extended with macaroni. Below—Chili Con Carne en Casserole.

(housewife to you) makes ox-tail stew or a ragout of some cheap and and unnotorious meat cut, which nevertheless makes one smack their lips over the flavor.

Ah, yes, it is *flavor*, after all, and flavor alone, which makes meat relished so highly. Deprive even the most prime cut of beef of its flavor, and what have you?

So, the first, and almost the whole trick of getting more meat for less money is to learn to extend meat flavor to other and cheaper ingredients. That is why a little bit of meat, plus a large amount of rice. noodles, macaroni, potatoes, crust, biscuits, etc., is going to solve this vexing problem touching our pocketbooks.

CENTER—the canned meat! Right here is a new handling of meats, a boon and an advance never before available to those who must provide some meats, and good meats, on a modest food budget.

Why are canned meats so important to the housewife seeking to stretch her shrinking food dollar? Because:

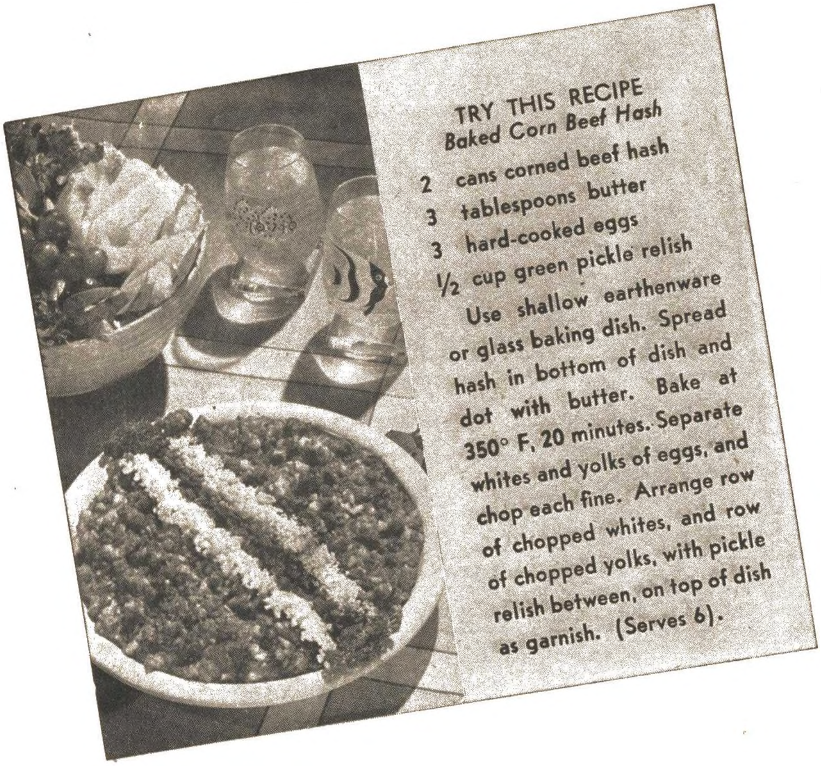
1. "Ready to heat and serve" means a saving in preparation time.
2. The above characteristic is responsible for a 90-100% saving in fuel or meat cooking costs.
3. Meat is packed without loss through gristle, bones, fat or other usual waste.
4. Packing in tin or glass prevents loss of food or moisture through cooking shrinkage.
5. Portability allows carrying the meat anywhere, and opening and using as desired.
6. Packaged forms require less storage space and less refrigerator costs.
7. Condensed form makes for greater extension of flavor, and adaptability to numerous dishes.

It is easy to see that in any meat cut, even a prime cut of fresh meat, there is a large amount of waste in relation to the edible portion, after trimming fat, gristle, bone, etc., from the meat itself. Watch your butcher next time you buy a loin of pork, or a third rib roast of beef, or some shoulder lamb chops, and see the difference—often a pound or more of waste thrown into the trimming box under the counter.

This economy point is emphasized because some women seem to think that canned meats are expensive. Perhaps they are thinking of a few special de luxe items such as potted tongue or chicken. But do you know this: that there are some 180 *different varieties of canned meats* from which to choose your dinner of the day, and that many of these are the inexpensive types.

In adddition to the de luxe potted meats, there are meats balls in sauce, mulligan or beef stew; spiced ham and ham patties, sausage and sausage with cereal; frankfurters, Vienna loaf, liver loaf, beef, pork and veal loaf; dried beef, smoked beef, corned beef, tripe and even roast beef and gravy out of a can! And don't forget that 10 minutes, or even 5 minutes fuel is the most that such ready-to-serve meats require for their heating. Contrast this with say 1½ hours of gas oven fuel to cook a small loin roast of beef, or the usual 3 hours and longer required for boiling or baking a large ham, and you have a notable fuel saving on your monthly gas bill.

"But how do you extend meat as you suggest? It seems to me that a small can of meat won't go far with my hungry



TRY THIS RECIPE

Baked Corn Beef Hash

2 cans corned beef hash
3 tablespoons butter
3 hard-cooked eggs
½ cup green pickle relish

Use shallow earthenware or glass baking dish. Spread hash in bottom of dish and dot with butter. Bake at 350° F, 20 minutes. Separate whites and yolks of eggs, and chop each fine. Arrange row of chopped whites, and row of chopped yolks, with pickle relish between, on top of dish as garnish. (Serves 6).

family. I can't seem to fill them up in any case." Or, writes another reader: "I have a family of four and my husband and son are big eaters. On my low budget for food, I simply can't think of what to buy and prepare for them."

Well, here are some concrete and well tried suggestions. If you wish to be methodical, you can go right down to the following list of *general* methods which make for an extension of meat flavors:

1. Use small amount of meat with sauce and with large amount of accompanying *starch* food, such as potatoes, rice noodles or macaroni.

Example: Cottage or Shepherd Pie, macaroni and beef balls, rice with chili con carne, beef stew with macaroni.

2. Use small amount of meat with *pastry crust.*

Example: Meat turnovers, ham roll with sauce, beef stew or corned beef hash with biscuit crust.

3. Use small amount of meat with green *vegetables, crumbs and sauce.*

Example: Sausage and corn scallop, chicken loaf souffle.

4. Use small amount of meat with *cheese, toast and sauce.*

Example: Chipped Beef Wiggle.

5. Use small amount of meat with *gelatin* and bouillon.

Example: Ham cider gelatin mold, meat or aspic jelly.

AND now for some concrete recipes. If we took 1 can of chili con carne by itself, it would not satisfy the appetities of four hungry people. But if we extend it with plenty of boiled rice, and then give it added richness by baking in a casserole, it will surely be sufficient. Like this:

CHILI EN CASSEROLE

1 cup rice, boiled
salt, paprika
½ cup tomato pulp or juice
1 can chili con carne
4 heaping tablespoons buttered crumbs
pimiento strips

Season rice with salt and paprika, and spread on bottom of 4 well greased bean pots or individual casseroles. Add tomato juice to chili, blend, and cover rice with

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mixture. Sprinkle tops with buttered crumbs, and garnish with star strips of pimiento. Bake, moderate oven, 30 minutes. (Serves 4).

Another way to extend these low-cost meat dishes is to make use of Grandmother's tried trick of bolstering out the dish with pie crust, pastry or baking powder biscuits or paste. In those old and difficult pioneer days, no one person ever sat down to a porterhouse steak, all for himself—not much! But whatever meat was available was cut up, added to a well seasoned gravy, and covered with a savory flaky crust. So too, Daughters of today, please copy. Cover the casserole with a single large crust; or cut into biscuits and set on top of the meat; or line the pie with sliced boiled potatoes; or roll out the crust and fill small squares of it with the meat mixture, pinch the crust and voila—clever meat tarts, pies or turnovers!

MANY long years ago the writer taught school, and alas, was forced to live in the home of a Cornishman. And what was the daily bill of fare? Pasties, on my faith, and good they were. Each morning the school man's wife rolled up her sleeves, rolled out the dough, and laid a mixture of meat and potato stew on top of each square of paste. Pinched were the edges, and baked in a hot oven. But here is a more delicious form of this old-fashioned turnover:

SWEET AND PUNGENT MEAT TURNOVERS

Pastry:

1 cup sifted flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons shortening
⅓ cup milk

Filling:

6 pineapple strips or fingers
1½ cup canned ham or corned beef, diced
1 cup pineapple juice
½ cup brown sugar
⅛ teaspoon dry mustard
1 teaspoon flour
1 egg yolk, well beaten

Combine pastry mix, as for baking powder biscuits, and roll out ¼-inch thick. Cut into 6 pieces. On each piece lay 1 strip pineapple, then cover with ¼ cup diced meat. Fold over dough like a turnover. Bake, hot oven (450° F) 15 minutes. Bring pineapple juice to boil, blend in sugar, mustard and flour, and cook until clear. Remove from heat, add beaten yolk and pour over baked turnovers. Serve immediately. (Serves 6).

THERE'S an unusual meat roll recipe in the leaflet I have ready to send *free* to those who write in for it. And that reminds me, also, that the first recipe on the leaflet is for a Creamed Chicken Loaf or Souffle which can't be beat for flavor or deliciousness (low cost understood). Don't miss getting that one for a special Sunday dinner or when you are expecting guests.

OF COURSE a platter of cold cuts, attractively garnished, are suitable all year around for Sunday supper or when friends drop in for a buffet at any time. Assorted meat loaves, sausage, onions and pickles make one delicious combination for such meals.

So get acquainted with canned meats, for economy's and variety's sake. See how many packs are on your dealer's shelves. Try out at least 20 of the 180 standard kinds of meats in cans and jars, packed to aid you in getting more meals for less money.

My Kisses Were Sold for Fame

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 85]

my mind by studying books on aviation and air-navigation.

Then one day my landlady came to the door and said: "There's a lady downstairs to see you, Mrs. White." I was "Mrs. White" to her and to the hospital where I had registered.

A lady to see me! My feet dragged on the stairs and I hated to enter the dingy front parlor. Only one woman knew where I was and my assumed name. Bill's wife!

She came forward to greet me, elegant and sure of herself in her mink coat and small veiled hat. She was slim and sleek with eyebrows that were slender, artificial arches and a mouth painted a savage red. But she was middle-aged and weary and somehow I knew I wouldn't be able to hate her.

"Why, you're just a child," she murmured and took my hand. It was a deep, haunting voice—it reached out and caught you and gave you a feeling of comfort and warmth.

"I'm old enough to know better," I said, bitterly. "And I'm learning fast."

"What did you want me to do?" she asked, gently. "Divorce Bill? I won't, you know. My religion prevents it and besides I—well, strangely enough, some day I want him back. . . when he gets through playing."

"You're welcome to him!" I cried. "I don't want him. I don't want any man. All I've ever wanted was to be somebody in the world. I didn't want this thing that has happened to me."

"Well, perhaps we can do business," Mrs. William Maylor said, thoughtfully.

She asked me a lot of questions. I answered them drearily. Finaly she made her proposition and I accepted it.

I sold all right to my child when it came. It was to belong to Mrs. William Maylor and she intended to use it to bring Bill back to her.

"I'll be good to it," she promised and added a little wistfully, "I always wanted a baby and I can do so many things for it."

The next day she brought her lawyer with her and I signed my name to a lot of important looking documents. Then she handed me a checkbook. "The money is in the bank for you," she told me. "I hope it brings you all the things you desire."

When she left I cried and cried. I had betrayed Bill and my baby. But he deserved it, I told myself fiercely. What consideration had he shown to me?. . . .

WELL, my baby was born and I never saw it. It had been a boy they told me. Mrs. William Maylor had been waiting with a doctor and a nurse.

I hadn't let Bill know when it was expected and the money he forwarded, I sent back to him. He would find out soon enough that I didn't need it—and why.

As soon as I got out of the hospital I left the city for that new life that I intended to find and which Bill's wife had made possible for me.

I went to San Francisco and took my flying tests there. With fifty hours in the air to my credit, I received my private license and it was there that I met Guilford Stanlin, aviation-enthusiast, wealthy club-man, polo-player and dilettante par excellence!

Guilford was getting a bit paunchy and his florid face was showing signs of the full life he had led, but he still had entre to California's wealthiest homes and was influential both politically and financially.

I wasn't the silly girl who had fallen into Bill Maylor's arms—I had learned a lot. I made myself very hard to get—so hard to get that Guilford Stanlin married me to achieve it.

I wasn't happy with him and I doubt if he was happy with me. I wasn't his intellectual or his social equal and the difference in our ages was very hard to bridge. I hated the feeling of his pudgy hands sliding over me and his moist, loose mouth on my skin—but I had discovered that everything has a price and this was the price I was paying for my own aeroplane, my own roadster, my Paris frocks and my jewels.

I tried to fill every waking moment with activity and I was seldom happy except when I was flying. Flying began to occupy more and more of my time. Guilford was proud of my achievements. He put up the money for my flight to Alaska and when I made the trip to South America and landed back in New York in record-breaking time he was so inordinately proud that I could have had the Spanish crown jewels.

But somehow I didn't want the Spanish Crown Jewels or any of the other things he could give me. The only thing in the world I wanted was a glimpse of my baby! The baby I had sold.

I wrote a pleading letter to Mrs. Maylor and asked her if she would bring the child to New York and let me see him. A formal letter came back from her lawyers saying that my request was impossible and that, according to the agreement which they held, I had given up all right to see the child or participate in any way in his life.

I hired a private agent to find Bill for me. I told myself it was purely business, but I knew that for three years he had seldom been out of my mind for a moment.

When I was flying, Bill seemed to sit beside me. When I was alone, the need for him burned me like a flame. I had told myself I hated him—but I knew that I would never be able to forget him.

The detective told me that Bill was down in Virginia with his wife and child!

Well, I thought, bitterly, this was the thing I had accomplished! I had united Bill and his wife. Whether she had gotten him back through threats of disgrace and exposure or whether he had gone back because she had been a good sport and taken the child, I don't know.

Whatever it was, I had lost them both and she had gotten them.

Not that it really mattered, I assured myself. After all, I had gotten what I wanted out of life. I was wealthy, famous, pampered. I hadn't wanted a baby. I was lucky to have gotten out of it so easily. Even Guilford Stanlin did not know about that chapter in my life. . . .

MY HUSBAND gave a reception for me at our beautiful house after one of my record flights. My husband stood proudly by my side, a little more florid, a little more obese as the years passed —but most inordinately proud of his young flying wife and perfectly willing for the world to still call her Carola Rand instead of the more formal Mrs. Guilford Stanlin.

"Mr. Maylor, Miss Carola Rand! Mr. City Commissioner, Miss Carola Rand! Mr. Chief of Police, Miss Carola Rand! General Blank, Miss Carola Rand! Ambassador So-and-So, Miss Carola Rand!" . . . the line was unending and I stood at the head of it, small, slim and elegant in flowered chiffon.

I stood meeting hundreds who wanted to see the girl who flew over oceans and mountains alone.

And then I came face to face with Bill. A Bill still bronzed, handsome and arrogant. Somehow I managed the introductions but Guilford had made so many trips to the bar between introductions that I doubt if he was sober enough to realize what this moment meant.

"Well, you got everything you set out to get, didn't you?" Bill said, lazily, as he slowly released my hand.

"Certainly, I did! You didn't think I wouldn't, did you?" I asked scornfully.

And those were the first things we said to each other after three years. We had loved each other and I had borne his

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child and this was our casual meeting!

"Let's find some place where we can talk," I urged, feverishly, and catching his hand I left my husband and guests staring after us and led him to a secluded sitting room that adjoined the reception hall.

"Tell me about him, Bill," I begged. "He's three years old, isn't he? Is he happy? What's his name? Is she good to him?"

He looked at me oddly, his eyes clear and cold. "His name is Bill Junior," he said, without emotion. "Bertha is crazy about him and he thinks she is his mother. He's just a happy, healthy, normal kid, despite his birthright."

"And you?" I asked, twisting my chiffon handkerchief into a string. "Are you happy, Bill?"

He shrugged. "As happy as I deserve," he said. "Bertha is a good woman. I never realized before that goodness can take the place of a lot of other things."

We stood and looked at each other. Three years! So much can happen in three years.

"I looked for you, Carola," he said at last. "I looked all over for you. I went sort of crazy when you disappeared. It had suddenly occurred to me that I loved you." He laughed bitterly. "I was always a little late in making up my mind about things," he added with a sudden catch in his voice. "I'd made up my mind that we'd go to Bertha and common decency would make her give me a divorce so that we could get married."

His voice was weary. "But you had disappeared," he said, "and then I got a letter from Bertha telling me she had the child and offering to share it with me. So I went back," he concluded, simply.

"But I wanted to tell you," he muttered, "that I'm sorry for the thing you went through and I'm glad that you've finally got what you wanted—all the success and the fame and the lovely things you dreamed about. You deserve them."

"And I wanted you to know," he said, suddenly fierce, "that if it's any comfort to you—I still love you. I'll always love you."

I took my cheap little revenge, avidly. "You were a little late in deciding that," I taunted. "I think perhaps three years ago I might have given up my desire for these things for the cause of love! All you would have to do was take me in your arms and I would have turned into a perfect wife and mother. But now," I laughed to hide the trembling in my voice, "I rather like these things that are mine. They are the things I always dreamed I would have. Think of it, Bill! Little Carola Rand, from across the tracks, with a penthouse on Park Avenue!"

He stood staring at me without speaking. His eyes were dark and opaque and expressionless. I was goaded to fury. "Oh, yes," I insisted, shrilly. "I like these things that are mine. My penthouse, my new aeroplane, my jewels and my fame. They're very pleasant—and I owe it all to you, Bill. You and your wife, who gave me my start!"

And then he caught me in his arms and kissed me brutally. His hands bruised my arms, his lips pressed mine in an ecstasy that was torture. "Things aren't everything," he muttered against my mouth, hoarsely. "You would give up your penthouse, your new aeroplane, your jewels for one glimpse of your son, and you know it, you beautiful little liar!"

"I wouldn't!" I cried and struggled against him.

But as suddenly as he had seized me, he let me go and I staggered back against the wall for support. Before I could get my breath, he turned on his heels and disappeared. I followed him wildly through the crowds that thronged around me, but I lost him in that melee and I had no idea how to get in touch with him again!

I left Guilford Stanlin. I don't think he minded. I had been a cold, reluctant wife. He became interested in his svelte, blond secretary and finally suggested that I go to Reno and secure a divorce on the grounds of incompatibility.

I told myself that when Bill Maylor saw the notice of my divorce in the paper he would come to me—but he didn't.

I still had all the things Guilford Stanlin had given me. I still had my fame as one of the foremost girl fliers of the country. But I wanted Bill. I wanted to fling myself in his arms and hold him tight. Tight! I wanted to feel his hands crushing me, his lips brushing my own. I wanted to cry: "You were right, my darling. Things aren't everything. These things that are mine. The penthouse, the imported roadster, the silver winged Bellanca. What do they mean to me? Come back to me, Bill. Come back to me and give me back my child!"

And finally he really came. He was thin and a little shabby. The crisp blackness of his hair was shot through with white. We stood looking at each other and finally Bill Maylor said: "Bertha is dead."

My heart seemed suddenly to come to life. "I'm sorry," I said, and meant it. "She—she was very decent to us both and—and—to our baby. That was why you couldn't come before, wasn't it?"

He nodded and his eyes, locked with mine, were boyish in their mute pleading. I held out my arms to him. "Bill," I whispered simply, humbly, "I love you. I've always loved you. Maybe you won't want me now, but if you'd marry me, I'd be the proudest woman on earth."

"Marry you!" he said, hoarsely. "If you only knew how I wanted to, Carola. I've wanted you every hour, every minute of the six years we've been separated. Oh, those wasted years, my dear, and the things they have done to us! I'll never be able to make up to you for those years and the unhappiness I caused you—but if you'll give me a chance, I'll try!"

THERE'S only one flier in the family now. Carola Rand has definitely retired. The penthouse has gone, so has the aeroplane and the imported roadster and the jewels. That part of my life seems like a dream. Bill wouldn't tolerate anything that had been a part of my life with Guilford Stanlin. We live on his salary—just as thousands of other American families who must pinch a little bit here and maybe owe a little bit there and do their best to keep within a budget.

But I love it. For the first time in my life, I am completely happy. Bill Junior is the most maddeningly beautiful man-child on earth. I begrudge every minute of the six years I was separated from him, but he is learning to accept me as his real mother and worships me as much as I worship him.

I suppose it is only through living and making mistakes that we learn just what is real in life and what isn't. We sow and reap what we have sown. Nothing is given gratis. We pay for knowledge with tears; for love with pain.

I am paying every day of my life in regret for those wasted years. But I am also reaping a rich reward in the love and happiness of my husband and son.

Secrets of a Strip Teaser

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23]

with me on the road, warned me. "Listen, kid," she said. "It's none of my business, but if I were you I'd go easy with handsome Harry. He's dynamite!"

"Harry Crown has always acted like a perfect gentleman with me!" I replied hotly. "He's just being nice."

"Sure! Sure!" Annabelle said easily. "But I'm just warning you. Even a perfect gentleman can get human, you know."

I tossed my head. It hadn't occurred to me before that Annabelle could be so jealous and catty. Maybe it was because I had had to defend him that I didn't hesitate when Harry invited me up to his room that night.

We were all stopping in the same hotel, and were saying goodnight in the lobby, when suddenly he suggested, "Listen, Sara Lou Parsons, suppose you come up to my diggings for a while. I've got an idea for a specialty you might do."

Well, there didn't seem to be anything wrong about that. People were always visiting about from one room to another in the show business. Besides, I had been hoping all along that there was some way I could break out of the chorus line.

When we go up to his room Harry poured me a glass of sherry. Down home sherry is a lady's drink, so now I didn't think anything about taking it.

Harry got out a lot of photographs and candid camera shots of different shows he had been in, and motioned me to a place beside him on the bed. Since there wasn't any other comfortable place to sit, other than a hard, straight-backed chair, I sat down without question and I relaxed against the pillows, sipping my wine. Suddenly I realized how tired I was and I closed my eyes with a sense of relief.

Suddenly Harry swept aside the photographs. "You're an awfully sweet girl, Sara Lou! And you worry me."

I raised my eyebrows in surprise. "Worry you?" I repeated."Why?"

"Sure," he said. "Alone the way you are. You sort of need protection."

"I get along all right," I protested. "Really I do."

He leaned closer. He took the empty glass from my fingers and then clasped me gently by the shoulders.

"You don't understand," he whispered. "I mean—I want to protect you!"

He bent my head slowly, gently until his lips met mine. For a brief moment I thought of Clay. He *was* like him. And then I didn't think of anything, as his mouth burned against mine and his hands pressed my trembling body closer.

I felt his fingers straying over my shoulders and beneath the thin silk of my dress, his hand seared my flesh. His caresses became more insistent.

The same little exciting shivers I had felt in Clay's arms raced through me, only I no longer fought against them. My mind seemed to be utterly separated from my body and yet I realized dimly that I was returning his kisses with an intensity that normally would have shamed me.

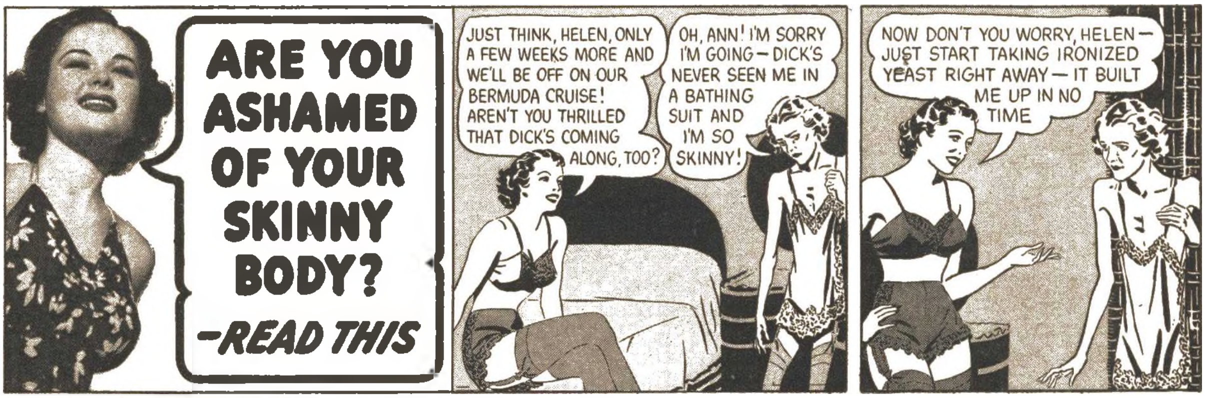
With an effort I regained control of myself. Strangely enough, Harry did not insist in his advances. If he had—

But he didn't. As I drew away from him and straightened out my rumpled frock he just smiled down at me, lightly caressing my bare arms with his fingertips.

I whispered, "You *do* love me, don't you, Harry?"

"Of course I do, honey!" he murmured ardently. "Would I treat you this way if I didn't? Would I let you go when you wanted to; would I respect your wishes about everything?"

I knew what he meant. If he had been as heartless and selfish as Annabelle and others in the show said he was, then he wouldn't have been content to stop with just petting. He must have known how weak my defenses were, how easy it would have been to overcome my scruples . . . for I was tired, and homesick, too. Tired of dreary hotel rooms and the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monotony of burlesque routine, and homesick for affection and love. Momentarily I had found forgetfulness in Harry's arms.

I GUESS that is why, several nights later, when I was once again wrapped in Harry's embrace, I didn't stop him . . . until it was too late! I protested faintly, as his kisses became more demanding but my words were smothered with kisses and my protective gestures turned strangely into answering caresses.

Much, much later I drifted slowly back to an awareness of what had happened. The full significance of my surrender dawned on me, and I started to cry.

Harry raised himself on an elbow beside me and brushed my hands away from my eyes.

"What's wrong, babe?" he demanded.

I couldn't answer. I was too ashamed, and when I tried to speak my voice choked with sobs.

"I suppose," he persisted, "you are going to tell me this was the first time?"

I nodded miserably.

Then he laughed — a funny, queer sounding laugh. He bent quickly and kissed me full on the lips, holding my face fast when I tried to twist my mouth away from his.

"Don't take on so, dear," he begged. "I'll take care of you. Everything is going to be just fine."

I tried to smile up at him. "I hope so," I said. "Because I do love you a lot. You *must* know that, don't you, Harry?"

He nodded, and patted me on the cheek. "Don't worry, honey. We're going to have swell times together—just the two of us."

Well, I believed him. Maybe it was because I needed so desperately to believe in someone, in something! Maybe it was because I was hungry for love, and he fed my hunger. For always, in his love-making, he was tender and gentle with me, playing on my emotions with the practised touch of a musician, until every nerve and fibre of my body quivered for his caresses.

Only when I spoke of marriage did he change. At first I hardly noticed it, and then gradually I realized that he always avoided somehow giving me a direct answer.

I said, "But we *are* going to be married, aren't we, Harry? Soon?"

He glanced at me sharply. "There's nothing wrong, is there?"

"No. Only—only I'd feel much better if we were really and truly married, dear."

He smiled. "Don't worry your head about it now," he told me. "There's plenty of time. Right now, with the show on the road, and everything . . ."

His words merged, as they so often did, into kisses, until I forgot my question.

ANNABELLE began to eye me oddly whenever we were together. Finally she said one day, "Well, you fell for the old hooey, didn't you?"

"I don't understand you," I answered coldly.

She sighed. "I hope you never do, kid. But I'm afraid you'll have to love and learn like the rest of us."

I turned away. Hearing her talk that way about my love for Harry made me feel common and cheap, as though my most intimate moments were public property. As though I was public property.

And I wasn't! I was Harry's, and some-day, soon, he was going to marry me . . .

A couple of days later Forest, the press-agent, got hold of me between shows, just as I was going out to eat. I was alone, because Harry had said that it was bad for the discipline of the other chorus girls if we were seen too much together in public.

Forest took me by the arm and led me out before I could protest. "Come along. Sara Lou. Have a bite with me."

I tried to pull away from him. I didn't like him. I didn't like the smell of whiskey that always clung to him. I didn't like the mocking light in his eyes.

I said sharply, "No! Let me go, please."

"Not a chance," he answered cheerfully. "You're coming with me. Listen, kid, I'm not going to bite you. We're going right across the street to a nice, shiny, white-tiled cafeteria, where all the world can watch over and guard you."

I tossed my head angrily. "I'm perfectly able to take care of myself, thank you!"

He glanced at me oddly. Then he grinned. "That's fine! Now suppose we go eat."

During dinner he talked in a rambling fashion of everything under the sun. After a while I didn't even bother to listen. Finally he hesitated, and then said slowly. "Look here, kid, I usually make a point of minding my own business."

I stared at him suspiciously. "Then why don't you now?"

He brushed aside my words impatiently. "It's just that I hate to see little girls take it on the chin. About this Harry Crown business, now."

"That's my affair!" I cried out. "You keep out of it!"

"Okeh. Only . . ." He hesitated, and lighted a cigarette carefully before he went on. "I sort of thought I'd prepare you for a little surprise you've got coming. Crown's wife is joining the show tomorrow."

I gasped. I felt my cheeks flushing, flaming hot, and then for a sharp moment my heart seemed to stand still. Then I faltered, "I don't believe you! Harry isn't married! He hasn't got any wife! He . . ."

Forest interrupted softly, "Just tell me, babe. Don't tell the whole restaurant."

I choked my words in. I felt my lips trembling. I wanted, desperately, to believe that Jimmy Forest was lying, but all the while I knew, instinctively, that he was telling the truth. And I hated him for it!

He leaned over the table and patted my hand. Furiously I jerked it away from him.

"Listen, babe," he said. "Keep your chin up. Remember, nothing important has really happened to you, except that maybe you've grown up a little. But you're really the same girl you always were. Guys like Harry Crown, and what they do, don't count!"

Springing to my feet I glared down at him. "You're contemptible!" I flared. "How dare you talk about my affairs like this! I hate you!"

He looked up at me somberly. Then he smiled, a twisted sort of grin. "That's a good idea, too," he said. "You just concentrate on hating me for the next few days, then."

MY FIRST thought was to see Harry immediately, and find out the truth. But something held me back. Maybe it was fear. Maybe it was pride. Maybe it was a combination of both. But I was sick to my soul. I don't know to this day how I managed to get back to the theatre.

And then I spied Harry, just before the evening show, with a flashy, peroxide blonde clinging possessively to his arm.

"Who's the girl with Crown?" I asked one of the chorus kids, and wondered faintly at the distant, hollow sound of my voice.

She gave me a swift, mocking glance from beneath heavily mascarred eyes. "His wife," she said shortly. "The old ball and chain in person!"

I remember that I had to hold on to the scenery to keep from falling. The agony of mind and body that pierced me was like a physical blow. I stumbled into the washroom and locked myself in but I couldn't weep. Waves of shame, remorse and anguish rocked my body but no tears would come to bring relief to my throbbing head.

I made up my mind to quit the show at once. I wanted to get away from Harry Crown and everything that might remind me of him. But then I realized miserably that that wouldn't do any good. I couldn't run away from myself. I had to stick, and pay for my own mistakes.

The words of Forest—*guys like Crown don't count*— kept coming back to me. If only he were right! If only I could ease my conscience of this stabbing, soul-searing remorse!

There were times, during the next few weeks, when I was absolutely sunk. It would have been different, perhaps, if my work had interested me, but chorus routine in a burlesque show was just plain physical drudgery. And unless a girl could do something, some special number of her own, there wasn't much chance of breaking out of the chorus line . . . and out of burlesque.

And so, like an automaton, I lived through the dull, endless, pointless days. My salary bought food, a bed to sleep on but my heart was sick and I was reaching an almost dangerous pit of despair. I, a decent girl, had given myself so carelessly, so stupidly because I was lonesome! Mercilessly I flayed myself and now even my job gagged me.

I TRIED to think of something I could do. I didn't have a good voice, so singing was out, and I was just an average dancer, so I couldn't do any specialty steps.

It was Annabelle who finally suggested a new role for me. One night when we were getting ready for bed, she said suddenly, "Look here, kid. Did you ever think of doing strip-tease?"

I stared at her dully, and shook my head.

"Well, why don't you?"

"I couldn't!" I protested, hardly stopping even to think. "I mean, I couldn't stand out there alone on the stage and strip naked!"

"There's more to it than undressing, dearie," Annabelle drawled. She sighed, "I'd try it, only I ain't got the figure. I'm too heavy in the hips and too droopy other places. But you—you've got youth and a swell shape. You might as well cash in on them."

I still continued to shake my head apathetically.

"Listen!" Annabelle said impatiently. "Snap out of it! What are you hesitating about? Showing your body? Aren't you practically nude most of the time now on the stage?"

"But strip-teasing . . ."

"Gets paid more," she broke in. "And is a darned sight harder to do. After all, you've only got one body, and if you are going to get paid for showing it you might as well get as much as you can!"

I agreed with her doubtfully. It wasn't until it occurred to me that it would be a chance to save up money for dancing and dramatic lessons that I became enthusisatic about the idea. Maybe this was the way out of the whole morass for me; maybe this was the "break" that would open the gates of the real theater to me.

Annabelle helped me prepare for my first performance. She had been in burlesque over five years, and knew all the tricks. Together we made my costume—the evening dress and cape and lingerie—I was to wear. Most of the leading strip-tease girls design their own costumes, I found later.

It wasn't easy, either. All the dress snaps and zippers had to be placed just right, so that each garment would open and slip off easily. And I had to learn how to disrobe properly.

It seemed funny, having to learn how to undress! But there is as much of an art to getting out of your dress as there is to wearing it.

I got my first chance a week later, when one of the featured strip girls didn't show up. I was more nervous before the performance than I had been the first time I appeared almost nude on the stage.

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DAVOL

"But I can't even remember the words to the song I'm supposed to sing!" I cried.

She laughed. "Who's going to bother listening to you? Those birds out in the audience pay to *look*, not to listen!"

I fidgetted in the wings, waiting for my cue. Suddenly it came. The stage darkened, and a baby spot of amber light picked me out as I half walked, half danced in time to the music to the center of the stage.

I stood there, swaying and wriggling my hips, as I sang the verse and chorus of a song that was inaudible even to my ears. Then I started moving, in the same half-dance step, back and forth across the stage. The music was langorous and tantalizing and I kept time to it.

I reached up slowly and undid the snap on one shoulder of my gown. I twirled, as my bodice slipped down, exposed my bras and scanties. Half-concealing the exposure, I moved across the stage, then unloosened the snap on the side of my bras. It slipped to the floor leaving me stripped down to my waist . . . I twirled . . . hesitated . . . stood for a moment in the full glare of the spotlight with my upper body nude, and then vanished off stage.

The tempo of the music became more suggestive, mingling with applause. I reappeared, a short bolero jacket of silk—sometimes covering my body from the waist up, sometimes leaving it bare—and a diaphanous net skirt.

Again I danced across the stage, turning when I reached the other side. With my back to the audience I undid the catch at my waist, and the skirt cascaded in a silken heap to the floor. Only transparent lace panties, over a tiny, spangled G-string, now made a pretense of covering me.

The spot flickered off. I disappeared, the spot flickered on once more and I came out holding my dress in front of me. Sometimes it covered me, partly and sometimes not. When I reached the other side of the stage I paused, fingered the zipper on my lace panties, and a moment later they, too, were tossed aside.

For a tense moment I stood there, nude but for the glimmering slim triangle of the G-string. Then I swirled into the wings.

Annabelle was there, waiting for me. "You did swell, kid! Okay!" she cried.

She cocked an attentive ear to the applause, then pushed me on the stage again.

"Give 'em another flash," she ordered. "Then off!"

Later, when we were in the dressing room, she told me that some girls took off their G-string—their last vestige of covering—when they took their final bow.

"You're not supposed to," she explained. "There's usually a house rule against it. But you can always alibi that the string broke, or something."

"I couldn't do *that!*" I exclaimed.

"Oh, yeah?" Annabelle grunted. "You'd be surprised at the things you can find it easy to do—when you have to!"

THE next week I got a regular job as strip-tease girl with one of the other units in the burlesque chain I was working for. Leaving the original company, I was no longer forced to see Crown and this alone did wonders for my morale. Harry had never once spoken to me nor come near me since his wife had joined the show and for this I was grateful, although I still smarted with shame and regret.

My salary was sixty dollars a week now, instead of the twenty-four I had been getting, but I had to pay for my own costumes.

I began to get a lot of publicity, too. My picture on the amusement pages of the newspapers, and then suddenly wisecracks I was supposed to have made began appearing in different columns.

I couldn't understand that until one day I found Jimmy Forest waiting for me in my dressing room.

"How's everything going, kid?" he asked, leaning negligently against the wall.

"What are you doing here?" I demanded. The sight of him could still make me burn with shame for he knew of my affair with Harry Crown that I was trying so hard to forget.

"Publicity." He grinned. "I'm the guy who helps bring the suckers in. How do you like the breaks you've been getting in the press?"

"So you're the one who's been getting me in the papers!" I said, "why?"

He stopped smiling for a moment, and said seriously, "Publicity, baby, is what makes bigger pay checks. And I want to see you get ahead."

"Somebody else told me that once, too," I blurted out bitterly.

He flushed a fiery red. For a moment I was frightened by the look in his eyes. Then he grinned his twisted smile.

"That's right, kid," he said solemnly. "You stay that way and you'll be all right!"

He turned and ambled out. For some reason I felt a little sorry. I wished I hadn't been so rude and sharp. After all, he was helping me, and he hadn't made any passes at me. It wasn't fair to compare him to Harry.

But even after my rebuff Jimmy continued helping me. He didn't say anything about it again, but I knew. And he always remained carefully casual in his relations with me.

I remember one afternoon he was taking some candid camera shots of my strip-tease act for publicity. I had to pose for him nearly nude. And it is different, somehow, undressing before just one man and undressing before an audience.

But Jimmy treated me as though I were a wax model. He didn't even make any remarks about my body—whether it was good, bad, or indifferent.

He still, however, kept asking me out to dinners and late suppers, and sometimes I accepted. He never mentioned Crown again—never, for that matter, got personal at all.

"Why are you so nice to me, Jimmy?" I asked once. "After I've been so mean to you."

He took a long time lighting a cigarette before he answered. "Maybe that's the reason, kid. Maybe I like mean girls. Who knows?"

Deliberately he changed the subject. But he continued getting publicity, until pretty soon I was almost as well known as the other two strip girls in the company, and they had been in the business a long time. As a result I got two raises in salary, and before long an offer from another burlesque circuit.

I WAS still wondering whether or not I should take it when the whole awful mess broke in April. We were playing a theatre in Brooklyn. I had just finished my strip act when a lot of strange men appeared back stage.

In a moment everything was confusion. The curtain was rung down, and out on the stage I could see the house manager expostulating with a group of men. I noticed for the first time that some of them were in uniform.

Policemen!

Two of them came over and took hold of me. I tried to wrench away, and they just held me tighter, twisting my arms.

"Let go of me!" I stormed. "What do you want, anyway?"

"We want you, sugar. You're going down to the station house with us."

"Why?" I cried. "I haven't done anything!"

I was still undressed, the way I had been when I finished my number. I was holding my costume in my hands, trying to cover myself up. "Let me get some clothes on, please!" I pleaded.

One of the men laughed coarsely. "Listen to who wants to get clothes on!" he sneered. "What are you trying to fake, you dirty, little tramp!"

Tears of rage and helplessness flooded my eyes. I stamped my foot childishly. The man just guffawed.

"Neat little piece, ain't she?" he gloated.

The other man said, "Aw, let the kid get into a coat or something."

But two policemen grabbed me and before I could even grab a wrap, we were led outside and jammed into the patrol wagon. The other strip girls were already there, along with the house manager and the comedians.

Annabelle said to me, "Don't let it worry you, kid. This happens every once in a while."

I just sat there, huddled up, shivering in fright and shame.

We were taken into night court, and charged with being "lewd and indecent!" There were a lot of other words and phrases in the charge, but those two burned themselves into my mind.

When I heard them I looked at the leering policeman who had brought me in. If *I* was lewd and indecent, just what was he, I wondered with his nasty words and ugly insinuations?

A lawyer and a bondsman appeared almost as soon as we got in court, and a little later we were released under $500 bail apiece. I suppose it all took only a short time, but it seemed like unending hours of torture and misery before at last I got home to the hotel room I shared with Annabelle.

"Shake it off, kid," she said. "You gotta take these little things in your stride."

"But it was so ugly, so sordid!" I wept. "They treated me as though I were a cheap tramp!"

"Probably the way they treat their wives, too," Annabelle consoled. 'Get some sleep, honey. You'll feel better in the morning."

BUT in the morning, there were the tabloids, with nude pictures blazing from the front pages. Nude pictures of me! And the flaming words "Lewd And Indecent!"

Not only that, but my name, too! SARA LOU PARSONS, STRIP-TEASE HONEY FROM THE SOUTH! That's the way it read.

I thought of Clay Horgan. I thought of all my conventional, proud relatives. I thought of the whispers and scandal that would sweep like a flood over our town when they found out about me. I buried my head in the pillows and cried hysterically. Nothing Annabelle said could stop me. The cumulation of my unshed tears over Harry and now this scandal broke like floodgates and I shook with deep sobs that wrenched my body like a hurricane gale.

There was an insistent knocking at the door and Annabelle answered it. I didn't even bother to turn my head, and then I heard Jimmy Forest's voice.

I buried my face deeper in the pillows, trying to stifle my sobs. After a moment, I heard the door closing again, and then I felt a hand on my shaking shoulders.

Jimmy said softly, "Take it easy, kid"

"Go away!" I moaned. "Go away!"

He sat down beside me on the bed, and ran his fingers through my hair. He had a soft, gentle touch. "What for, kid? Why should I go?"

I sat up a little, turning my tear-drenched face towards him. He took it in his hands, and studied it quizzically "Lord, what a cute mug!" he murmured.

He got up, went into the bathroom, and came back with a towel wet with cold water. Softly he bathed my face. I tried to push him away, but it wasn't any use. I just stayed there like a child, letting him finish.

"Now," he announced finally, lighting a cigarette and shoving it in my mouth. "We'll get down to earth for a change. I suppose you think your life is shot to pieces?"

I nodded miserably.

"Do *you* think those things they printed about you are true?" he demanded.

"Of course not!" I flared. "Are you suggesting . . ."

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Olive . . . . ☐
SKIN Dry ☐ Oily ☐ Normal ☐

EYES
Blue . . . . . ☐
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Brown . . . . ☐
Black . . . . ☐
LASHES *(Color)*
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AGE

HAIR
BLONDE
Light . ☐ Dark . ☐
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Light . ☐ Dark . ☐
REDHEAD
Light . ☐ Dark . ☐
If Hair is Gray, check type above and here ☐

"I'm only suggesting that you are a little fool, Sara Lou!" he broke in, in a cool voice. "You know yourself, Sara Lou. And you ought to know that what nasty-minded people say or write about you doesn't affect you, inside. You're the same person you always were!"

"But . . ."

He stopped me with a gesture. "All you did was display your body. It's the same thing that most girls do every day—as much as they can get away with—only they don't admit it and don't get paid for it. So what?"

"What's going to happen to me?" I cried. "I can't go on in burlesque any more . . ."

"All right, you can't," he agreed. "But there are plenty of other things you can do. You can stick to the stage, and study, and get somewhere, if you work hard and if the breaks are with you. And I'll see that you get the breaks, Sarah Lou!"

He hesitated, as though he wanted to say something else, and then evidently he decided not to.

Instead, he got up, and smiled his twisted grin. "I won't even ask you to trust me!" he added, and he went out.

Somehow I couldn't help smiling a little at that last gag.

AND then, the next day, Clay Horgan came!

There was a knock on the door, and when I answered it, there he stood! For a moment the shock of seeing him seemed to stun me, and then a variety of emotions raced through me.

He came into the room, closing the door behind him.

"Glad to see me, Sarah Lou?"

"I—I hardly know what to say!" I stammered. "How on earth did you ever get here?"

"I've been wanting to surprise you for some time." He laughed a little shakily. "Only as it was you surprised *me*, first!"

I felt the blood rush to my cheeks, but before I could answer him he came closer. "Aren't you going to kiss me, Sarah Lou?"

I raised my lips and his mouth closed hotly over mine. It wasn't the kind of kiss I remembered. It was more like—more like Harry Crowns!

I squirmed nervously, and tried to push Clay gently away. His lips bruised mine again for a tense moment before he finally let me go.

"What's the matter, Sarah Lou? Don't you love me any more?"

"Of course I do!" I protested mechanically. "Only—I guess I'm a little upset, that's all."

I sat down hurriedly on the couch. There were dozens of questions I wanted to ask him about home, and my friends, and all the folks at home. And then, with sharp suddenness, I remembered and didn't dare to! I didn't dare learn what they were saying about me!

I was conscious of Clay looking at me in an odd way, and then he startled me by saying: "I have something important to ask you, Sarah Lou?"

I waited nervously.

He hesitated a long time before he went on, and then he said slowly, "will you marry me, Sarah Lou? Today?"

I gasped. For a moment I couldn't believe that I had heard correctly. Clay, still wanting to marry me! In the face of all the scandal I was caught up in! Then it occurred to me dimly that possibly he didn't know.

"You've seen the papers, haven't you, Clay?" I said. "You know what I've been doing up North here?"

Without looking at me, Clay said stiffly. "Yes. I know. But I still feel we're engaged. I asked you to marry me once, and . . . I'm asking you again. A Horgan doesn't go back on his word!"

I STARED at him blankly. Through a daze I seemed to hear his next words. "I'm giving you a chance, Sarah Lou, to come back home and lead a decent life. You used to dislike the way I live, but I guess it will seem pretty nice to you now."

The realization of what he was saying suddenly burst on me. "Are you insinuating, Clay Horgan," I flared angrily, "that I'm not decent!"

"I'm not insinuating anything." He shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "I asked you to marry me to save your honor. Besides a Horgan . . ."

"Doesn't go back on his word!" I mimicked furiously. "You said that before. I think you'd better go now!"

He reddened angrily. "So that's all the thanks I get for offering you a good name! A lot of fellows wouldn't have bothered. But I . . ."

"You did splendidly," I said. "The perfect Southern gentleman! Only you had to spoil it by talking about honor . . ." I sagged wearily back on the couch. "Oh, let's stop it, Clay! Only . . . please go away!"

Instead he got up and stood over me. "Why should I go?" he said hoarsely. "I guess I got as much right here as any of the other men you've had lately! I guess I'm as good as any of them! At least I

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asked you to marry me, didn't I? Didn't I?"

His voice rose in a snarl. He glared down at me, his eyes suddenly hot and bloodshot. "And I've got as much right to you as any one else! More! Wasn't I the first one to hold you—to kiss you? But all along you were teasing me . . . pretending . . . and now you're anybody's girl."

"Clay!"

Suddenly, he covered me and without warning, he swept me into his arms. My lips burned with his hot, searing kisses. His hands slid down my back, pressing my body tightly against his . . .

I struggled frantically against his crushing embrace. Tearing my lips away from his mouth I cried out in terror: "Clay! Clay! Are you mad!"

"Please, Clay!" I begged. "Please let me go! If this is what you think of me . . ."

Suddenly I heard the door bang open. A moment later Clay was torn away from me. Dimly, through my misery, I listened to a short scuffle, and then the door slammed to again.

I opened my eyes and stared mistily up at Jimmy Forest. He just looked at me, and then headed for the bathroom, coming back with a wash rag. "Your face needs washing again," he said grinning but I couldn't see the humor of the situation.

As he bathed my face I sobbed miserably, "Oh, Jimmy! You don't know what happened!"

"I know most of it," he grunted. "I was out in the hallway, waiting."

"Then you heard . . ."

"I heard," he snapped. "Is it your fault if a mug acts like a mug? The strain of being a Southern gentleman was too much for our friend, I guess."

I tried to laugh a little. I said shakily, "You know all the answers, don't you?"

He shook his head slowly. "No." Then he paused for a long moment, looking at me searchingly. "I don't know yours, for instance."

When I didn't say anything, he went on slowly, "I wanted to wait until you'd forgotten this burlesque mess before I said anything. But it looks as though it couldn't wait. What I'm trying to say is, I *really* want to marry you, kid! I want to marry you for an old-fashioned reason that has nothing to do with your 'honor' or with chivalry or another moth-eaten notion. I want to marry you, kid, because I love you. I've loved you since that first day I bumped into you in the wings. I loved you all through your affair with Crown. I didn't speak sooner because I didn't consider myself good enough for you—you're so young and lovely."

In a swift flash I thought of all the times I had snubbed him. All the times I had been mean and nasty to him. All the times he had been ready and on the spot to help me out of messes and jams, without any thanks. He knew all about me, and still he didn't think *he* was good enough to marry me. A lump formed in my throat and tears sprung into my eyes at the man's goodness.

I said slowly, "You mean, after . . ."

"After you know me a little better," he broke in, grinning, "you might change your mind. You might even learn to love me, too. That's why I'm asking now."

"I'll let you guess the answer, then," I whispered softly. "I don't need any time to know that you're the finest man I've ever met in my life and I don't need more time to fall in love with you—I think I'm more than a little in love with you already!"

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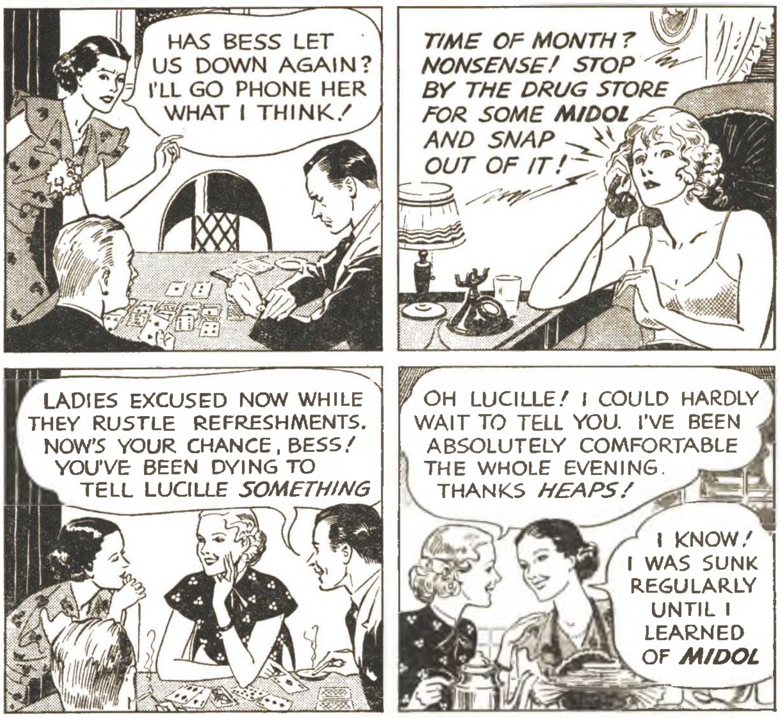
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LADIES EXCUSED NOW WHILE THEY RUSTLE REFRESHMENTS. NOW'S YOUR CHANCE, BESS! YOU'VE BEEN DYING TO TELL LUCILLE SOMETHING
OH LUCILLE! I COULD HARDLY WAIT TO TELL YOU. I'VE BEEN ABSOLUTELY COMFORTABLE THE WHOLE EVENING. THANKS HEAPS!
I KNOW! I WAS SUNK REGULARLY UNTIL I LEARNED OF MIDOL

MONTHLY martyrdom to functional periodic pain is out of style! It's now old-fashioned to suffer in silence, because there is a dependable relief for such suffering.

Some women who have always had the hardest time are relieved by Midol.

Many who use Midol do not feel one twinge of pain, or even a moment's discomfort during the entire period.

Midol brings quick relief which usually lasts for hours. The principal ingredient of Midol is one that has often been prescribed by specialists.

Don't let the calendar regulate your activities! Don't "favor yourself" or "save yourself" on certain days of every month! Keep going, and keep comfortable — with the aid of Midol. These tablets provide a proven means for the relief of such pain, so why endure suffering Midol might spare you?

You can get Midol in a trim aluminum case at any drug store. Two tablets should see you through your worst day.

REDUCE SAFELY...QUICKLY By EXTERNAL METHOD

Lose many pounds safely, without drugs, harmful diets or tiring exercises! Take off extra superficial fat at only those places where you want to reduce. Hundreds of women in the last 25 years have kept slim, youthful-appearing figures this easy, inexpensive harmless way. Originally prescribed by a doctor for his wife . . . then friends begged for it . . . now it is available to you!

Money-Back Guarantee! Act Today!

If you do not lose at least 12 pounds with the first jar of Cream, following directions, your money will be refunded at once! Write today for full half-pound jar of Dr. Hatch's Formula Massage Cream . . . $1.00.

Reduce 12 POUNDS in 4 WEEKS ...or no cost

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853 SEVENTH AVENUE
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PROFIT BY THESE AMAZING EXPERIENCES!

"I have lost 47 pounds and think your cream wonderful." L. P., No. Carolina.

"Have had wonderful results . . . lost 30 pounds." Mrs. O. R. S., Penna.

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Send half-pound jar of Dr. Hatch's Formula Massage Cream. I will pay postman $1 plus postage on delivery. (Postage prepaid if $1 accompanies order.) If I do not lose 12 pounds in 4 weeks, you will return my $1 at once.

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Fat Girl Laughs and Grows Slim

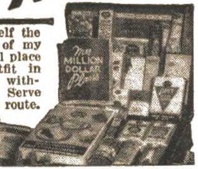
Without Starvation Diets, or Back-Breaking, Bending and Rolling Exercises.

Here's a way to get rid of ugly fat that works hand in hand with Nature. Millions of people are losing millions of pounds of flabby flesh and getting back slender figures, without the need of starvation diets or back-breaking exercises.

Medical science has discovered that one of the causes of too much fat lies in a little gland. Doctors correct this condition by feeding this little gland the substance it lacks — and Marmola Prescription Tablets are based on this same method. Millions are using them with success. They are prepared by a famous medical laboratory. Their formula is published in every package so you know what you are taking.

So don't waste time and money with starvation diets or back-breaking exercises. Go to your druggist today and get a box of Marmola. Try this simple, easy way to get rid of excess fat.

Get This Amazing MONEY-MAKING OUTFIT Now!



Now you can prove to yourself the amazing profit possibilities of my simple, sure-fire plan. I will place this handsome Display Outfit in your hands for 30-day trial without your risking a cent. Serve steady customers on a weekly route. Big profits with over 250 groceries and household necessities. Ford Tudor Sedans given producers as a bonus. Postcard brings you amazing offer FREE. No obligation. Act at once. Send penny postcard to **ALBERT MILLS, Pres., 4092 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, O.**

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Presenting Miss Typical America

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15]

associated with the typical American girl type. Miss Ochman wins sixth prize of $25.00 in cash.

Seventh prize winner, who will be awarded $25.00 in cash, is vivacious Bernice Pratt of Tampa, Florida. Miss Pratt is vivid, sparkling, animated—all-American traits!

Winsome Miriel E. King, nineteen-year-old eighth prize winner hails from Atlantic City, N. J. She has light brown hair, hazel eyes and the serenity of true loveliness. She receives $25.00 in cash.

Blonde Edna Mae Cornelius of Cedartown is the Georgia "peach" who wins the ninth prize of $25.00 in cash. Sparkling, honey-sweet, Miss Cornelius, too, is a splendid American girl type.

TRUE CONFESSIONS wishes to thank all its readers for their interest and cooperation in making our *Typical American Girl Contest* one of the most animated and successful contests ever run by a magazine. We hope you approve of the winners and we know you join us in wishing MISS TYPICAL AMERICA and her "runners-up" for the title, the best of luck and good wishes in their careers—whether they be on the screen or in any other phase of fine American living.

Born to Love

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13]

GEMINI—May 21 to June 20

Romantic fulfilment is shown for those of you born in Gemini. If you do not find your ideal in love at this time, have hope, for the rest of the year will be more than kind to you. The cases of Jeanette MacDonald and the former Mrs. Wallis Simpson, both Gemini-born, show clearly that Gemini people are taking the spotlight at the altar this year. There are changing conditions at present that incline you to two love affairs. Be cautious in making your final decision.

CANCER—June 21 to July 22

Excellent aspects exist this month for those born in the Sign of Cancer. One romance may pass out of your life, only to be replaced by another. Your charms assure you of attracting a sweetheart at this time. Should you enter into any permanent engagement this month? Much depends on your individual planets, but for the general Sun position, the stars warn you not to make up your mind as yet, for you may find some one who is much more appealing, if you wait longer. This month favors business contacts, and the meeting of future friends. The full Moon period will favor romance, and possibly bring a new love affair.

LEO—July 23 to August 22

The Sun, which is your Ruling Planet, favors romance this month. You face unusual and pleasant experiences in love. There may be a tendency to flirtations and a warning must here be given re-

Secrets of a
RACE TRACK GIRL

Whether or not you've ever played the races, you'll find this an illuminating true story. It is the unsparing confession of a love-blinded girl who worked as a lure for a professional "tipster." Flaming infatuation . . . a struggle with the law . . . blasted romance . . . a chance to come back. All these make "Secrets of a Race-Track Girl" a revealing and poignant story.

Also in this issue:

WAS I UNFAITHFUL?
A Husband Measures Morals by a New Code

IF I HADN'T BEEN EASY

MAN TROUBLE

MY COLLEGE BOY LOVER

DON'T ENVY ME!

• •

October ROMANTIC MAGAZINE on Sale September 10th

Romantic MAGAZINE
SECRETS OF A RACE-TRACK GIRL
WAS I UNFAITHFUL
Romantic MAGAZINE

garding romance with a married man. On the whole, however, you face pretty clear sailing in love and if you use your head instead of your heart, you will find romantic happiness. There are good aspects from the money planet Jupiter this month, and they favor new financial contacts, or changes in your business connections. A month of optimism and good cheer!

VIRGO—August 23 to September 22

Be careful that you do not let yourself be fooled in love this month! You are generally rather gullible in romance, and this month is apt to bring one or more fascinating men into your life. It favors men in the business or professional world, and their charm and personality may be used by yourself as a measuring stick. Look for hidden motives at this time, and do not accept love and kisses of which you are doubtful. Your genial nature and your tendency to flirt a little, may make you the target for unconventional suggestions and advances. Protect your interests, and hold onto the old love for another month rather than seek the new! You must remember that Mercury, the ever-changing Planet, is your ruler. What should be more natural than that you are tempted to constantly seek a more perfect and idealistic love?

LIBRA—September 23 to October 22

Ever fascinating, but not ever constant! I am afraid this applies to your romantic alliances at this time. You are passing through a transit of the love planet Venus, and certainly you deserve a little better treatment at the hands of Cupid than you have known in the past. This month ushers in a new era in love. Be prepared for excitement and happiness. It is best not to be permanently attached, but if married and unhappy, make the most of it for changes are imminent.

SCORPIO—October 23 to November 21

Mars offers fewer afflictions at this time than formerly. You now come into a cycle of romantic happiness, although it is doubtful if your plans will find their complete fulfilment. Be on the alert for progression at this time, and take advantage of opportunities offered you by members of the opposite sex. Remember that you can win the love you desire, and that you also have it within your power to crush your lover's heart! Guard your jealous nature, and let your tongue be coated with sugar instead of acid!

SAGITTARIUS—
November 22 to December 21

You may find unusual and fascinating attractions in love this month! You deserve much better conditions in your life than you have known, especially is this true in regard to romance or marriage. Because so many Sagittarius-born make the wrong choice in marriage, it might be well to warn the unmarried to be most cautious at this time about making a decision. Better wait, and be sure that financial conditions are better. Jupiter, your ruler, favors changes, new locations in home or business, and the seeking of advancement through superiors. Your most pleasant romantic contacts may come through business acquaintances. Be ever on the alert to advance yourself socially,

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192 PAGES
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Earn up to $22.50 in a Week! Take orders from friends and others for amazing new Christmas Card values! *Made-to-order* with sender's name. You sell 50 folders for only $1. **FREE Samples.** Liberal earnings. Many men and women earn up to $2 an hour. No experience needed. Also sell $1 Assortments of **25** Christmas Cards; others 50c. Make big money every week now to Christmas, full or spare time. Send today for **Free Selling Outfit.**

General Card Co., 400 S. Peoria St., Dept. P-133, Chicago, Ill.

Sell 50 With Sender's Name FOR ONLY $1.00

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At the Helm – in time of need

RELIEVES TEETHING PAINS
within 1 Minute

WHEN your baby suffers from teething pains, just rub a few drops of Dr. Hand's Teething Lotion on the sore, tender, little gums and the pain will be relieved in one minute.

Dr. Hand's Teething Lotion is the prescription of a famous baby specialist, contains no narcotics and has been used by mothers for over fifty years. One bottle is usually enough for one baby for the entire teething period.

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DR. HAND'S Teething Lotion

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Complimented for loveliness... the skin that is *Satinized*

FREQUENTLY, admired skin and complexion owe their rose-petal loveliness to Chamberlain's, the lotion that *satinizes*. This clear, golden liquid lotion, used regularly, enhances natural loveliness, encourages smoothness, freedom from irritation, relieves chapping. Chamberlain's Lotion is most convenient to use, dries quickly, is never sticky, greasy, gummy nor "messy." At all toilet goods counters.

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Please send free trial size of your lotion.

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And Your Own Hose FREE of Extra Cost

Here's the way to get the cash you need. Supply hosiery Guaranteed to wear without holes, snags or runs for as long as a HALF YEAR or will be replaced FREE of charge. Earnings can start first day. Grace Wilber earned $37.10 in 9 hours. Fords given producers. Send name on penny card for sensational quick starting sample outfit offer. Act now!

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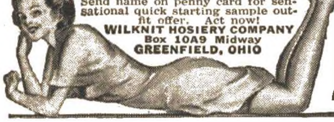

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for your natural charm and wit, coupled with your idealistic nature, makes you most attractive to members of the opposite sex.

CAPRICORN—

December 22 to January 19

A romantic decision at this time may baffle you. Should you, or shouldn't you? In common with most Capricorn, you may feel strongly the need of breaking an old tie in romance, and seeking another love affair. The stars advise change and new experiences should flock to you. Your choice may narrow down to two men, and then you will have to let your heart rule your head! The afflictions of Saturn are about over, and your course lies ahead of you without many obstacles. Most of your problems are of a financial nature, according to the stars, and if you act wisely at this time, you can take advantage of some splendid opportunities for self-advancement in business, as well as romance!

AQUARIUS—January 20 to February 18

By this time your romantic destiny should be well in hand. Your usual foresightedness and poise in emergency matters will take care of the obviously distressing situation that may arise in your love life. Try to be firm at present, and if you must break old ties, even though it may mean breaking a heart, do so, for your own good at least. You will then have clear sailing and can live your life more freely. Your love of the unconventional may force you to break family bonds at this time. Be careful not to let yourself enter into any compromising positions that might threaten your reputation or bring you undue publicity. Scandal from hidden sources might threaten, but if you are most cautious, you can avoid this suggestion of gossip.

PISCES—February 19 to March 20

True to your general nature, you are apt to be very considerate of someone who loves you, even though you might not reciprocate that love! Try to be alert to your own chances for happiness, and do not yield so readily to sympathy. Your Planets present excellent chances this month for romantic happiness, if you will listen to their promptings. You will absorb the magnetic rays of Neptune, and men will find you irresistible at this time. For those unfortunate Pisces-born who cannot take advantage of the wonderful freedom now offered them by their Planets, there is one course open. Act without haste, and await the final solution to your romantic or marital problems. You face much better times, so take heart!

THERE is an inevitable climax to all romantic problems. For some, it comes at one time; for others, it may be delayed for months. No matter what your birthdate is, you come under the influence of a ruling star that brings to you the eventual fulfilment of your romantic dreams. It is possible to know many secrets by consulting the Stars.

Let Norvell tell you your characteristics, your possibilities in romance and marriage, as shown by your ruling Planets. Be sure to send for the Trial Chart for the time of your birth! Send your birthdate—year, month and day to Norvell c/o TRUE CONFESSIONS, Fawcett Bldg., Greenwich, Conn. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope together with TEN CENTS for your own horoscope!

ATHLETE'S FOOT

Responds Quickly—Unfailingly to Urado Oil, a healing, refined, live Shale Oil, mined in the mountain fastness of western Colorado. Penetrating, stainless, harmless to the most tender skin. Urado Oil is sold with a money back guarantee. Write for Free circular or send 75c M.O. for trial size bottle, sufficient for ordinary cases. Urado Products Co., Beason Bldg., Salt Lake City, Utah.

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Irritation Due to Nasal Congestion

CHART FREE!

Hall's Catarrh Medicine relieves phlegm-filled throat, stuffed up nose, catarrhal bad breath, hawking, and Sinus headaches caused by nasal congestion. **Relief or Your Money Back.** At all Druggist's. **Send Post Card for Free Treatment Chart.** 65 years in business. **F. J. CHENEY & CO., Dept. 2210 TOLEDO, O.**

OCTOPUS OF CRIME

EX-G-MEN....

. . . spread a net over San Francisco police corruption to snare the octopus, caught a dozen high officials, brought fear and worry to scores more, as vice and gambling made citizens of the city of the Golden Gate flush with shame. Read the *true* story of the shocking exposé of these million dollar racketeers in the October *true*.

Tapped telephone wires . . . fur-clad madames . . . mammoth police bank accounts . . . dictagraph records of vice fixers in the shadow of the police headquarters . . . the *true* story of an exciting war against crime and civic corruption . . . Read "The Shame of American Cities" yourself in the issue of *true* now on your newsstand.

NOW ON SALE

Port Of Lonely Hearts

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7]

study of law, wishes to correspond with a girl about his age interested in dancing, law, swimming and aviation.

Charles, India

A bookworm in the *Port*. I AM a young girl still attending high school and would like to correspond with pen pals. I am not lonely but enjoy writing letters. I am a blonde, have light brown hair and deep blue eyes. I enjoy all different sports, music, and love to read. I will exchange snapshots, so come on all of you pen pals and write to:

Grace, Kan.

Doesn't this arouse your curiosity? WHO is interested in adventure and the thrills of getting letters from an unknown? I am especially fond of travels and enjoy correspondence from interesting people and places. Age thirty-five, black hair, dark brown eyes and weight about one hundred and thirty-five pounds. I will be delighted to correspond with gentlemen from thirty-five to forty-eight years of age.

V. G. R., Ill.

Look! Navy men. I AM a boy sixteen years old and live in Canada. I have black hair, weigh one hundred and fifty pounds and am five feet eight inches tall. I like dancing, swimming and all other sports. I'd like to hear from boys and girls everywhere, especially boys in the navy. I promise a reply to every letter, so come on and write to me.

Amos, Canada

Young and carefree. HI, BOYS and girls from every where! Would you care to write to a girl of sixteen, with light brown hair, blue eyes and not bad to look at? I would like to hear from pen pals between the ages of sixteen to twenty-one and particularly boys who travel. I will answer all who care to write.

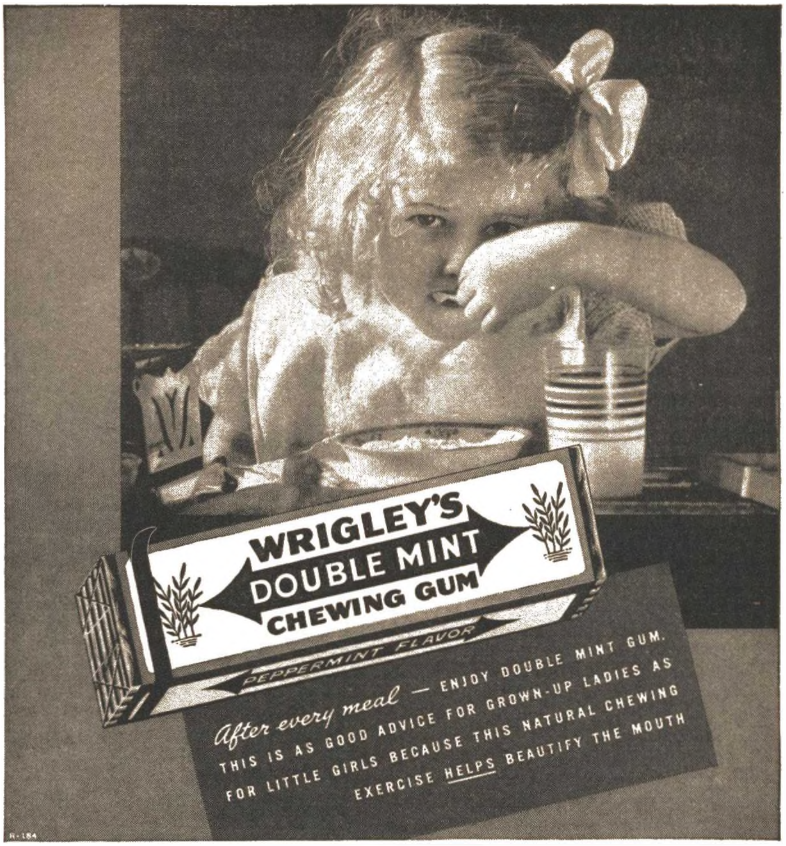
Audrey, Ky.

Enjoys being a friend to everyone. I AM twenty-five years of age, five feet, three inches tall and weigh one hundred and twenty-eight pounds. I was born and raised in Honolulu, the most talked of place in the world, "The Paradise of the Pacific." I like all kind of outdoor games and sports, especially boxing and tennis. As far as looks are concerned, I might qualify, but of course, I'm no Clark Gable or Bob Taylor. I assure you I will answer every letter and will be glad to swap pictures.

Phil, Calif.

Oh! So lonely. I AM very lonely and anxious to have pen pals. I am thirty-five years of age, have fair complexion, very pretty teeth, light brown hair and weigh one hundred and twenty-four pounds. My friends compliment me on my fine personality but, due to an illness, I spend most of my time at home. I am interested in most anything, so you see I am not hard to please. Come, one and all, and surprise me with a deluge of mail.

Milley, R. I.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DOUBLE MINT
CHEWING GUM
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After every meal — ENJOY DOUBLE MINT GUM.
THIS IS AS GOOD ADVICE FOR GROWN-UP LADIES AS FOR LITTLE GIRLS BECAUSE THIS NATURAL CHEWING EXERCISE HELPS BEAUTIFY THE MOUTH
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Free for Asthma

If you suffer with attacks of Asthma so terrible you choke and gasp for breath, if restful sleep is impossible because of the struggle to breathe, if you feel the disease is slowly wearing your life away, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Co. for **a free trial** of a remarkable method. No matter where you live or whether you have any faith in any remedy under the Sun, send for this free trial. If you have suffered a lifetime and tried everything you could learn of without relief; even if you are utterly discouraged, do not abandon hope but send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Address

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HAPPY RELIEF FROM PAINFUL BACKACHE

Caused by Tired Kidneys

Many of those gnawing, nagging, painful backaches people blame on colds or strains are often caused by tired kidneys—and may be relieved when treated in the right way.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking excess acids and poisonous waste out of the blood. Most people pass about 3 pints a day or about 3 pounds of waste.

If the 15 miles of kidney tubes and filters don't work well, poisonous waste matter stays in the blood. These poisons may start nagging backaches, rheumatic pains, lumbago, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from the blood. Get Doan's Pills.

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It's easy to get orders from your friends and others for our beautiful new line of Playing Cards, *including new Initial and Monogram Cards.* Unique, smart styles; low popular prices! Liberal profits. Make up to $22.50 in a week, full or spare time.

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Easy as penciling your eyebrows in your own home; not greasy; will not rub off nor interfere with curling. $1.35 all drug and department stores.

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GIVE ORIGINAL HAIR COLOR.

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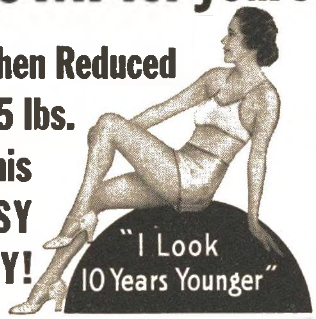

TOO FAT for years

*Then Reduced 55 lbs. this EASY WAY!

"NOW I CAN WEAR STYLISH CLOTHES"

● Don't put up with ugly fat, so often due to causes which can be controlled. Try this modern way to reduce without starvation diets or strenuous exercise. This method supplies a needed substance often lacking for the control of reducible fat. Why not do as thousands of other now slender, happy women have done? Read what Mrs. L. R. Schulze, of Jackson, Mich., writes: "After being overweight for years I tried RE-DUCE-OIDS and lost 55 lbs.! I look ten years younger!" From Crandon, Wisc., Mrs. Porter Tyler writes: "I reduced 67 lbs., and felt better right from the start, felt fine when taking RE-DUCE-OIDS. Now it is a pleasure to wear all the new fashions!" Mrs. W. B. Smith of Lyons Station, Pa., writes: "I lost 34 lbs., 5 lbs. the first week." Mrs. Gladysse Ryer, Registered Nurse of Dayton writes of losing 47 lbs. with very satisfactory results. Miss Elnora Hayden of Merion, Pa., reports reducing 30 lbs. Miss Loretta Lee of the Southside Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles, and many others write of their remarkable success with RE-DUCE-OIDS, the easy way.

IMPORTANT! Positively **NO Dinitrophenol.** Pleasant to take. Genuine RE-DUCE-OIDS have been sold by leading stores for 22 years.

SATISFACTION or **MONEY BACK IN FULL**—if results do not please you. Sold at leading drug and department stores. If your dealer is out send $2 for 1 package or $5 for 3 packages direct to us. Currency, Money Order, Stamps . . . or we will ship C. O. D. and your postman will collect on delivery. **Plain wrapper, no embarrassment.**

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☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Will pay postman

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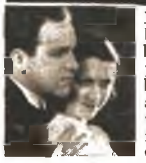

Skin Itch Kills Romance

Many shattered romances may be traced back to ugly skin blemishes. Why tolerate itchy pimples, eczema, angry red blotches or other irritations resulting from external causes without seeking quick relief from soothing **PETERSON'S OINTMENT.** 35c all druggists, (50c in Canada). Money back if one application does not delight you. Wonderful, too, for tired itchy feet and cracks between toes. For **FREE SAMPLE** write Peterson Ointment Co., Dept. HK-16, Buffalo, New York.

All the way from Manila. I AM a high-bred Spaniard living in the Philippine Islands and am a student of Commerce in one of the oldest Universities under the American flag. Come on, boys and girls, know something about this country and its people. I will be glad to exchange pictures with my future pen pals.

Jose, Philippines

Another Fred Astaire. I AM a young man of twenty-five and resemble that ballroom dancer movie star, Fred Astaire. I am interested in dancing more than anything else and stamp collecting is my sideline, although I am only a beginner and would appreciate any help in increasing my collection. I am anxious to receive letters from all you philatelists and dancers.

Joie, Mass.

Tell him about your experiences. I AM a happy-go-lucky young man of twenty-one, five feet eleven inches tall, blond hair and fairly goodlooking. I would like to hear from pen pals in other states and other countries about your experiences. I am very much interested in sports of all kinds and will be glad to discuss them with you. Please write.

Charlie, N. J.

Something new and interesting. I AM in service in New Delhi, capital of India. I'm fond of travelling and business. I have a novel scheme in mind, travelling all over the world without any money. Pen pals all over the world write to your new friend in India and give me some helpful hints on my idea. I will also be glad to supply information regarding India.

Ramta, India

Full of pep, vim, and vigor. STENOGRAPHERS, sailors, soldiers, students, aviators, anyone, please write to a business college girl who hopes to be a secretary in the near future. I'm young and gay, love all kinds of activities, especially letter writing and receiving. Now, all of you, send this brown haired, brown eyed girl a letter so that she can tell you about the Oil Capital of the world.

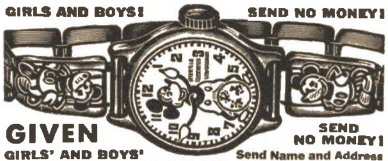
B. Okla.

Here's a good sport. I AM a student in Baylor University, nineteen years of age, five feet tall, blue eyes and considered, by the opposite sex, very good looking. My favorite hobbies are dancing and swimming and my weakness is boys with dark hair and eyes. I will be willing to exchange snapshots with anyone. Be a good sport and write to:

Judy, Texas

He's not particular. I AM a gentleman thirty-five, have dark hair and brown eyes. My work takes me in the states of Massachusetts, New York and New Hampshire. I would like to hear from pen pals all over the world. I am fond of brunettes, blonds and auburn haired girls, young and old. I like singing and all kinds of lively fun, so lets hear from you all.

Herby, Mass.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The Marriage Clinic

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 50]

love. Instead, the new love has wiped out everything—made me hate the thought of the one who is counting the days till we can start out life together. What should I do and how should I go about telling my wife?"

IF SOMETHING is not done very soon to educate the youth of this love-mad age we will have a situation bordering on chaos, as a result of child marriages, high school engagements, grammar school annulments, and college divorces. Here you are still in school, and if you had your way you would be taking out your second marriage license! You think you are in love this time for sure. That is what you thought during your four-year engagement which, by the way, indicates you were engaged at about fifteen or sixteen. You thought you knew all the answers even then. Now you are sure that you were wrong then but right now, and you would send the first girl packing to make room for girl number two, after which you would collide with girl number three, suffer some more and argue some more.

Why don't you face facts? You were not in love at fifteen, and are not in love now. You are simply going through what every man goes through in the process of growing up, only you are making a downright indecent to-do about it. You are eloping, planning divorces, more elopements and, in short, stirring up a heap of emotional dither. Being susceptible to feminine charms is a perfectly natural reaction, but becoming a slave to those charms, until your whole existence is one long session of concentration on the subject, is an evidence of emotional weakness.

Your problem is not how you can acquire wife number two. Your problem is to get a grip on yourself and stop acting like a bug that has turned over on its back and does not know just what to do.

By all means go to work this summer, but not in the town of this campus Circe. Go somewhere alone and make a man of yourself.

This is not love that has you in these spiritual contortions. It is a phase of growth and it will pass. May it pass quickly or you will find yourself completely surrounded by wives, ex-wives, and much amused fiancees. In the name of your sex, pull yourself together, for you are, emotionally, a wreck and not capable of making any sort of decision. Spend your time with men instead of women and your problem will solve itself!

BOY FRIENDS AND DADS

"I AM a constant reader of your column and enjoy it very much. I suppose I should be happy with the world and everybody in it, but I am not. I become so lonely and blue sometimes I could scream. I envy large families and only wish mine was one. I am an only child.

"I am nineteen, have a good job as stenographer, nice clothes and nice friends, but still I am unhappy. I live with my father, aunt and grandmother, and they are all just lovely to me, but I know I do get so discouraged when they cause me to lose every boy friend I meet. I have a nice friend, who comes around three or four times a week and treats me wonderfully, but I have been staying out late with him and so my father became angry and told me I would have to stop it as long as I was around him. He told me I would have to be in by 10:30, as no daughter of his was going to 'run around all night.'

"Now, I know I don't have to live at home as I am nineteen and in order to keep peace in the family, I suppose the only thing to do is to leave. This would break my heart for I love my folks and home. But to tell the truth I want to get a husband and you cannot get one today unless you go after one, and keep after him.

"I know my friend is on the very verge of really loving me and asking me to marry him.

"I have had other boy friends, but they all expect you to stay out late with them. It is not a case of 'running around all night'—it is just the usual thing. How can I be so different and expect to have friends? Just write me a line and give me your opinion in my case and I will certainly appreciate it."

DON'T take Dad so seriously. He is just laying down the law after the fashion of dads. Agree with him. Then do the best you can! But try to get home by 11:30, on general principles, however, and you will soon stop "feeling blue."

You know, sleep is a necessity. We can go without it just so long—and after that we begin to show it—and feel it.

Confide in your Boy Friend. Tell him just what happened, tell him you are tired, and Dad is up in arms, and you must get in the beauty sleep—and in another month you will be fresh as a rose, and happy as a lark. And the boy friend will be yours more than ever. Just see! And remember this, the girl who expects a man to look after her and take care of her, and save her from fusses at home, invariably is looked after, taken care of, and saved from fusses at home! Men love taking charge. They eat it up. And they feel closer to a girl after she has told them all her troubles. Men really like to be protective, they like to feel they have had a hand in running a woman's life.

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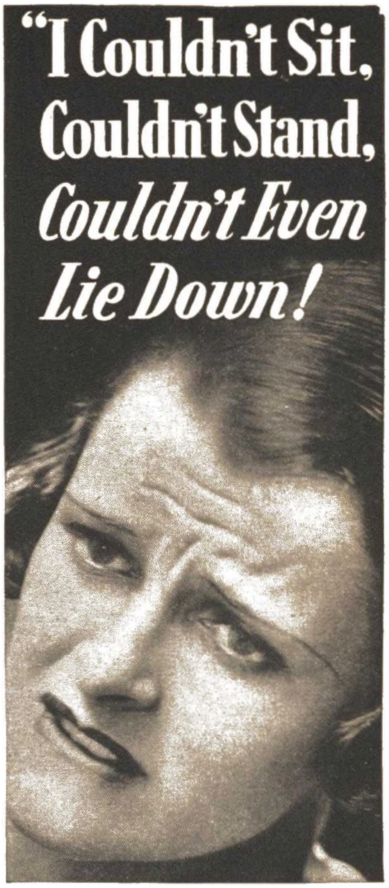
"I Couldn't Sit, Couldn't Stand, Couldn't Even Lie Down!

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Ours Was a Cocktail Marriage

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41]

Taking stock of ourselves, back in the station's washroom, when the train pulled into Rawlings at last, I couldn't see any reason why we shouldn't have a corking good time.

Pet was pretty, in the blonde, baby-doll sort of way that went over big with the men, but I was more. I would have been dumb if I hadn't known it—certainly not Mother's daughter. It wasn't beauty of feature so much—Mother hadn't been really beautiful, either. Her mouth had been too large for beauty and her lips too red and full, but she had possessed and given to me, that illusive thing that goes by so many names: It—Sex Appeal—Lure—Glamour. The unconscious power of making every movement; every low, husky tone of voice, every careless glance from lazy eyes, speak the language a man knows and must listen to. And she also had given me her slight body, frail almost to childishness, and red hair that blazed above eyes as dark as a pansy's purple heart, and lips that knew only too well how to turn themselves into a crimson challenge.

I had come prepared for whatever chance might offer. There was an evening outfit in my tightly packed bag, complete to tiny, glittering slippers, and the copper-brown sports suit I was wearing was expensive and becoming and new. Pet was as well fortified as I, if not quite as extravagantly.

Pet was fatherless and motherless as I was, but instead of a wealthy stepfather to foot the bills, a spinster aunt was putting her through school, and she was tight and scrimping and hard.

Pet didn't make any secret about having her eyes open for any boy whose family had money and whom she could vamp into marrying her. Her eyes were always sliding over any boy she met with an eager, hungry sort of judging that made me squirm.

She was through with her make-up before I was, and in the mirror I could see her, waiting impatiently for me. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement and her eyes just a little scared. No date, not much money; just tickets to a game. . . .

I grinned at her and gave the impudent little hat, that topped my flaming hair, a practiced tilt. "Happy landings, kid!" I said, and picking up my bag, led the way out of the station.

FOOTBALL day is a big day in a small town like Rawlings. The streets were packed. It was a little after one, and everybody we saw, seemed to be heading for the game.

We were over by the curb with the cars whizzing dizzily by us, wondering just what we would do next, when we saw the bright green roadster, with its top down, and the boy at its wheel.

The engine was going, for no car had any right to be parked in a place like that, and he was watching the station exit and swearing out loud, his hat pushed back from his rumpled hair, his face red with angry impatience.

I had a queer feeling that I'd seen him before, but I couldn't think where or how—and I was too busy noticing the Rawlings banners that were plastered all over his car, to try very hard. Even from where I stood, I could catch the gleam of

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a jeweled fraternity pin on his sweater.

I nudged Pet: "Look! Do you see what I see? That's a Rawlings guy here to meet a date that's gone sour on him! Our big chance—watch me hook him!" And, dropping my overnight bag, I gave it a little kick with the toe of my shoe so it rolled over the curb and down and under the wheels of his car.

I'd expected him to see it fall, but he didn't. And he didn't see us. I stamped my foot. "Can't you stop swearing long enough to get my bag before you run over it?" I snapped. "And—if you think you're the only one who wants to cuss—think again! We're here for your old game, and our date hasn't shown up either!"

He was out of the car and on the sidewalk almost before I'd finished. And he had my bag from under the wheels, but he wasn't giving it to me. Just standing there holding on to it and grinning, while I kept getting surer and surer that I'd seen him somewhere before. I would have asked him, had he given me the chance. But he didn't.

"A red-head and a blonde . . . and on the loose!" he whistled. "Holy cow! Who says there isn't a Santa Claus?

"Mr. David Andrews, my dear young ladies, and at your service!" and bowing from his waist, he motioned us toward his car.

IT CAME to me then what that resemblance was, and my heart almost stopped beating. "I knew it!" I cried. "I knew I'd seen your face somewhere! You're Dig Anderson, the football player! You're Dig Anderson, aren't you?"

I'd never seen anyone's face change so completely, nor so quickly. His lips that had been so smiling and gay and reckless, straightened into a sullen line, his eyes grew hot with quick resentment. "There you go! This darn' hero worship! No, I'm not Dig Anderson. I'm his twin brother, Dave—Duke, to pretty girls like you. And what is there about a guy's kicking a bit of pigskin around a field, to make you girls fall for 'em the way you do?"

Pet had a way with her that she'd copied from Mae West. It was good. And she'd taken a back seat long enough. She leaned around me where Duke could get a good look at her, and did her stuff:

"That's just what I say!" her voice dripped sugar. "Lynn's football crazy, but me—I like my men with clean faces and not so much mud in their hair."

I laughed at that—I couldn't help it, remembering how once she had chased a football player right into his quarters to get his autograph in her album. And what made it funnier than ever, was that with all her lying, Duke's eyes came right back to me. He hardly noticed her.

"Listen, shrimp," he said, his voice sulky. "I was sent here by Barker, one of our coaches, to meet his sister who was supposed to be on this train. I've only met her once, but I know darn' well she isn't either of you—and I've watched that exit until my eyes are sore. . . .

"If this is straight stuff you're giving me about your date not showing up, and about your being here for the game—how about giving me a chance? I'm not a football hero, but—I've got my points. I can scratch up a guy for Blondie, here, and our house is giving a brawl afterward. We could take it in."

Pet's eyes were blazing, and I didn't blame her much. After that pass she'd made for him, his turning to me that way, was a slap in the face.

[*Please turn to page* 120]

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WHEN KISSES LIE

BY
M. N. BUNKER

YOU may think that your writing, or that of someone you love, does not reveal your innermost nature, but it does. Your lover's writing shows just how he will act; whether he loses his temper and will be mean or if he is loving and affectionate. It even shows the kind of food he will like and how he wants it seasoned.

So this problem of Marjorie's is just one of many where pages from old letters help to solve difficult problems. In Marjorie's case she is faced with the question of whether to believe what her friends and family say about the man she trusts, or to continue to believe in him. Her letter is followed by the rather startling truths revealed by her own handwriting and that of the man.

"Dear Mr. Bunker:

"About eight months ago I met Bob at a church affair. He was without doubt the handsomest man there, and awfully nice to me. Afterward he asked to take me home. We went for a drive and he did not pull any rough stuff, but acted like a perfect gentleman. I could not see any harm in knowing him, but the following day a girl told me that she would not trust him. She would not tell me why.

"Down in my heart I thought she was jealous, and that very evening Bob came around again. I was lonely so we went to a picture show, and riding. This went on for several days until my aunt met him. That evening she told me she did not like him, and that she had heard things about him, too. I simply could not think that she was right. I do not think it now. On his part he has told me time and again that he thinks I am 'tops.'

"He never acts fresh and he is certainly handsome. My aunt keeps at me wanting to know how he makes his money, but I do not know and, as I am not engaged to him, I do not think it is any of my business. He has not said anything about marriage, although I thought he would.

"Just the same he says he thinks more of me than any girl he has ever met, and talks as though we are going away where no one knows either of us. Of course I do not want to leave all of my friends, but I shall do it if they keep talking about Bob.

"When I read that handwriting tells all about a man, I decided to write and send you a part of a letter from Bob. Please tell me the truth. Even if it does hurt, I want to know what his writing reveals. Also I wish you would tell me about myself."

AS YOU know, Marjorie, I do not even know your friend's last name, but his writing says that he prefers pastry and that he probably eats his share of any sweets he buys for you. As a very small boy, he was very selfish, and he has not changed.

His writing reveals these facts just as plainly as though he sat in my office and told me the same things in so many words. His writing also shows that he wears very good clothes if he can get the money with which to buy them. He likes suits of a deep rich brown or dark blue and he probably wears a different tie each time you see him.

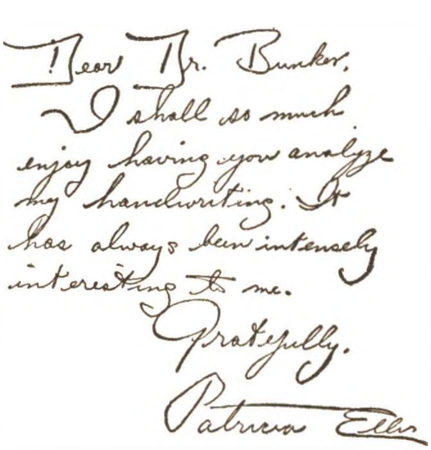
All of these points about your friend are not important, but you can check and see for yourself how truly his writing reveals his habits. When you have done this, you can be sure that what I tell you about his character is also written in his penstrokes.

He takes pleasure in deceiving people. Not you alone, but anyone he meets. He will deceive for months at a time and never regret the damage he has done to those who trusted him. Instead of having turned over a new leaf this page from his letter shows that he has merely become more capable of making falsehoods sound like the truth. He is not honest, even though he may look you straight in the eye when he talks.

YOUR own writing shows that you have some talent, not only for dramatics, but also for music. You think quickly, adjust yourself to circumstances readily, and generally like people. Also you want people to like you. Your writing shows that you are hungry for affection, but you are honest and square.

You see now, Marjorie, that your writing tells the truth. You are sincere and loyal and should make a very happy marriage, but you cannot be happy with this man whose writing you have sent me. He will not care for any girl for any length of time, and if you let him go he will be making the same promises to some other girl within a month.

Handwriting reveals your innermost nature and will aid you, not only with your love problems but with any other problems you may have. Don't stumble around in the dark, wondering what you should do. Send for your analysis today and be guided to happiness!



Dear Mr. Bunker,
I shall so much
enjoy having you analyze
my handwriting. It
has always been intensely
interesting to me.
Gratefully.
Patricia Ellis

MR. BUNKER WILL HELP YOU!

Are you worried about the one you love? Are you troubled about money, business, or your family? No matter what your problem is, M. N. Bunker, world-renowned handwriting expert, can help you. Send a sample of your handwriting — your sweetheart's —a member of your family's— anyone in whom you are interested to Mr. Bunker and he will analyze the writing and send you a report. Address your letter to M. N. Bunker, Fawcett Publications, Inc., Greenwich, Conn. Enclose 10c for each sample of writing and a *stamped, self-addressed envelope* for your report.

True Confessions
Novel of the Month

I LOVED A WANTON

TRUE CONFESSIONS NOVEL OF THE MONTH

I LOVED A WANTON

Chapter One

I WAS nineteen when my stepfather tried, for the last time, to whip me. I was just out of high school then, and I had been star half-back on their football team. I laid him out cold, packed my duds in an old suitcase, and started—for Hollywood.

Oh, no Clark Gable or Robert Taylor complex—nothing like that, but I could ride anything that had four feet, and swim like a fish. And I wasn't afraid of God, man or beast. I thought perhaps as an extra or a stunt man, I might make it go, and Hollywood was as far away from Greenville, New York, and my stepfather's bullying as I could get.

I hadn't one cent to rub against another, so I bummed my way; hitch-hiking, riding the rails; slum-gullying at night with any hobo who'd take me in.

My name was Ebby Ronay. I changed it afterward to Edward Roniger.

I was a big, strapping kid, raw as they come, and so innocent it makes me feel gulpy and sad just remembering. That is—I was innocent when I started.

It's a long way from York State to California, and a penniless boy can learn a lot in the time it takes him to cover it.

I had begun to learn even before I met Dot Schmitt, but it wasn't until then that this story really began.

It was in a little one-horse town in Iowa. I'd stopped at one of those restaurant filling stations that pepper the road for a cup of coffee and a hamburger, and while she was fixing it for me, we got to talking.

She had what it takes, that girl, to make any fellow sit up and take notice—even a shy guy like me. One of those blondes folks read about, with a skin like cream and corn-yellow hair and a figure that even a movie star could envy.

But it was her big blue eyes that did things to me, that sent little pricks tingling down my spine. And there was something about her lips, full and pouting and red, that made me fairly ache to kiss them.

I'd never thought much about girls before, but sitting there watching her, I got to wondering what it would be like to have my arms around this one, on some dark night with no one watching us, and I could feel my face burn clear up and into my hair.

And when she found out I was on my way to Hollywood . . . !

"Funny you haven't given it a try . . . a girl with your looks . . ." is all I'd said, but it had been like poking a stick into a smouldering fire.

"Smart guy! And maybe you think I haven't wanted to? Maybe you think I like slinging hash in a hick dump like this? Funny, huh? Ten dollars a week, and two-thirds of it plunked over every Saturday night to my folks. I could go a long way, couldn't I, on what's left?"

I'd never seen a girl so bitter. It sort of scared me.

"You could—hitch-hike," I said. "I've seen lots of girls on the road since I started. . . ."

She just glared at me. "Yeah? And what do they look like? Something th' cat's dragged in. But—don't think I wouldn't have done it if getting to Hollywood was all there was to it. But a girl's got to have something besides looks in that game. She's got to have clothes, and a pull. She's got to be able to put up a front.

"Do you know what I would do, kid?" She put her hands down on the counter and leaned over it toward me, her face so close I could smell the perfume she used on her hair, and her breath, sweet and hot on my cheek. "For a chance at Hollywood, I would sell my soul to the devil—that's what I would do. And be—glad."

A truck driver came in. "Quit your gassin' with that punk, Dot, and spill me a hamburg!" And when she slammed it down in front of him, he caught her hands and pulling her over to him, tried to kiss her. She gave him a look like a knife, and yanked herself free. I knew the smile she gave me, over his shoulder, was for his benefit, but I puffed my chest out beneath my sweat shirt, and said, "How about a date tonight, if I stay over?"

That "punk" had made me mad.

I loafed around the gas station all day talking to Dot, when she wasn't busy, and watching the people who drove up. Dot had promised, if I wanted to wait till she was off duty, we'd take her brother's old Ford she was driving, and go into the next town for the movies and a glass of beer.

It sounded pretty swell to me. I'd worked for a farmer back in Illinois for a week or so, and I had a little money, and I hadn't had a date since I'd left home. Never'd had one with a girl like Dot. And besides, I was tired. It seemed good to rest a while.

I was sitting out in front of the station in the shade when a farmer drove his truck in for gas. He was a little guy with a fringe of grey hair round his bald head. He said, "Hello, kid. Stranger round here, ain't you?" and smiled nice and friendly. He had a girl with him on the high seat, and she smiled too. She had a starched gingham dress on, and brown hair tied back off her face with a blue band, and a little turned-up nose with freckles across it.

She said, "I'll get a soda, Dad, while you have your car filled," and I had to grin, the way she swung herself down over the wheels. Independent. Not giving a whoop for anything.

"Nice kid," I thought. "Got a cute face." And when she dropped her little coin purse, and it rolled into the dust and under the car, I got it for her. I noticed her hand when she took it—small, but as brown as mine was.

"Thanks," she said. "I'm always dropping things. But generally I have to pick them up myself." Her smile was like her father's; friendly and wholesome and clean. And against the even brown of her cheeks, her teeth were so white they startled me.

"You look like the kind that could," I told her, and grinned back at her. I wasn't nervous with her as I had been with Dot, nor embarrassed. Not even when I saw that she wasn't the kid I'd thought her at first, but as old as I was.

It was her being so tiny, and wearing her hair tied back the way she did, that made her look so young. And when she went into the restaurant, I watched her starched gingham swinging around her, and the square way she plunked her little flat heels on the ground and laughed. There was something so fresh and sure and wholesome about her. Like Mother's kitchen after its Saturday's clean-up, with its white scoured floors, and the bread fresh from the oven cooling on the table. I felt homesick for the first time since I'd run away.

I was still sitting there when her father came up.

"On the bum, kid?" he said, and when I nodded, he asked, "How about a job for a while? You got shoulders like an ox and look's if you could use 'em.

"I need a man for th' haying. A dollar a day and your keep. And Cora's some cook, if I do say it who's her pap. Want to lay over for a while?"

I said, "That Cora?" and thumbed toward the stand.

He nodded and grinned. "Don't look like much, does she? But boy! you ought to taste her pies! Her ma's dead. She keeps house for me. What about it, son? Want to give me a hand for a week or two?"

Cora came out from the lunch room, stood beside him, her brown fingers on his blue shirted arm. There was a little smudge of chocolate at the corner of her mouth, and her father said: "Wipe your face, kid. I'm trying to get this boy to help me out with the haying by telling him what a swell cook you are. And here you can't keep your face clean!"

She got red as fire and smudged at her mouth with her hand. But when I laughed, she laughed too. "If you want to ride up with us," she offered almost shyly, "you'll have to sleep in the barn loft, but—we're going to have strawberry shortcake for supper."

Over her shoulder, I saw Dot standing in the door of the restaurant with the wind blowing her tight skirts and the setting sun shining on her corn-silk hair, and my heart began to pound.

"I'm ready if you are, Eb," she called. "The car's out behind th' filling station. If we're going to Fernbank, we'd better get started."

And I said to Cora, reddening at the look I saw in her eyes, "The barn loft's okay with me, and if you'll make that shortcake for tomorrow night, I'll be there!"

And turning, I went back to where Dot was waiting for me. She was curious. "That's old man Gost. He owns a farm down the road a piece. What did he want with you?"

"Wanted me to help with the haying," I told her.

"Yeah? Cora doing the bargaining?" She slid her eyes over me and laughed. "Kind of a lady's man, aren't you, Ebby? Think I'll be safe going out with you?"

I knew she was kidding me, and if it had been Cora, I could have kidded back, but just being with Dot choked everything I had to say back in my throat. I couldn't think of anything but that slow smile of hers, and the way her eyes slid over me.

Chapter Two

I WAS nineteen and small town. Small town boys, as a general rule, are pretty wise. I'd heard the gang back home talk about what girls did to them—the way they made them feel, but I'd never really known before. I knew now. I was goose-flesh all over, when Dot and I climbed into that old car of hers together.

I think, even then, she must have been planning how she could use me, or she wouldn't have bothered with me.

It was only about fifteen miles to Fernbank, and as we drove out, Hardin, who ran the gas station, gave Dot an envelope with some bills in it to deposit at the Fernbank Trust, where he banked. It was Saturday night, and the place would be open from eight to ten, and it saved him having to carry it over Sunday.

I told him I thought he was pretty brave trusting it to Dot, with a guy like me around. He just laughed.

"You've got a good face, kid . . . and anyone old man Gost thinks well enough of to hire is okay with me. Anyway, I'm not handing it over to you . . . but Dot."

As we passed the village station, a train roared through—the limited, westbound. Dot patted the package as she followed it with her eyes. "There's five hundred bucks here—enough to take us both to Hollywood, and keep us till we landed work," she said. "And Hardin would never miss it. He's got a five hundred acre farm, and two more stations like the one I work in!"

I said, "Swell! Let's take it," and grinned. But she wasn't laughing. It seemed to me I'd never seen such hungry eyes.

I thought a lot about that on our way into town . . . not the money part, that was just a joke, but about her saying, "Enough to take *us* into Hollywood."

It gave me a thrill that nothing in all my life ever had given me before.

We stopped at the bank, and Dot made her deposit. Then we went to a little tavern she knew about, and had a fish dinner with beer and pretzels. Afterward we went to the movies.

Dot sat there all the time the picture was showing, her eyes glued on the screen, never moving. She didn't seem to know when I put my arm around her, and I kept it there until the lights went on, feeling the warm curve of her breast beneath my hand, and with my heart pounding so hard I couldn't hear a thing.

Dot told me that I could spend the night at her place, if I wanted to bunk with her two kid brothers and, on our way, we talked. Or rather, she talked and I drove along that straight white road unwinding before me, only half listening, but conscious, with everything in me, of her there beside me, our shoulders brushing, my hand touching her knee every time I shifted gears.

There were six in her family, all younger than she. They were Germans—old country. As near as I could make out, no one could whisper around the dump, unless her father gave them leave. She'd had to learn to dance on the sly, and he thought movies were the contraptions of the devil. She even had to wipe the rouge off her face before she went inside the house.

She hated her home so bad you could hear it grate in her voice, and she hated her job almost as hard.

"Hardin's a good guy, but where does that get me? He's got a wife and eight kids himself. All he wants of me is to make eyes at the truck drivers so they'll buy his damn' hamburgers! All day long standing there wisecracking, dating now and then with some hig-hearted guy who's idea of showing a girl a good time is to take her to a dance and do a little hot necking on the side!

"As for marrying any of th' punks I meet around here, where would that get me? A bunch of kids, like Ma, and a wash tub for th' rest of my life!"

She was darn' near crying when we drove up to her place, and I didn't blame her much. I knew how she felt. I'd felt that way too.

I didn't even try to kiss her when I said goodnight. And I could've, if I'd wanted to. I knew that. But I knew it wouldn't have meant anything to her. I wanted my kissing to mean something to her, like it did to me.

But before we went inside and she showed me my room, I did get up courage enough to whisper to her, low, for fear her old man would hear. "If I stay around for a while—work for Gost—will you date me some more, Dot? Like—tonight. . . ."

She didn't answer at first. I thought she hadn't heard me. At last she said slow, as though she were pulling her mind back from some place far away, and with something so fierce in her voice it almost scared me: "Yes—I'll date you. Why shouldn't I? You're nothing but a kid, but, at least, you've got—ideas.

"We're headed for the same place, you and I. Maybe, between us, we can find some way of getting there."

I spent the night wrapped up in an old quilt on the floor. And I didn't sleep, although it wasn't where I was, that kept me awake. It was remembering what Dot had said, and trying to figure out how long it would take me, working for Mr. Gost at a dollar a day and my keep, to get Dot and me to Hollywood.

I got out before sun-up, and hoofed it back to town and over to Gost's place. I figured it would make it easier for Dot, if she didn't have any explaining to do about the night before. And anyway—I was hungry.

Being in love—and I took it for granted that that was what had happened to me—hadn't seemed to keep my stomach from gnawing and from all I could see around the Schmitt place, it didn't look as though the old man would be very generous with his food and how I wanted to make friends with a square meal!

The filling station was just opening up as I went by. I said, "Hello," to Hardin, then got my suitcase I'd left there the night before. I asked him where the Gost place was. Told him I was reporting for work.

"You'll be just in time for some of Cora's sausages and flapjacks," he grinned, and rubbed his stomach with his hand. "There's a girl for you, kid! Her mother died when she was fifteen, and she's kept house for her father ever since. And can she cook! Say, she'll fill out them big shoulders of your'n, till you can wrestle her pa's best bull and lick him! Sunday, too. Bet you have chicken and biscuits for dinner! And, say, don't forget to save room for her angel food cake—it'll sure enough make you think you've died and gone to heaven!"

Where I'd worked in Illinois, the woman had been one of those sow-belly and fried potato cooks. So, you see, I hadn't had a real meal since I'd left home.

I kicked up the dust getting to the Gost place, I'm telling you. By the time I rounded the neat flagged walk that led to the kitchen door, I was almost running.

Cora was drawing water at the pump. There was a lilac bush beside it, heavy with purple blossoms. The dew from them had shaken down over her brown hair and round brown arms. It seemed as though the morning had carried its fresh, clean sweetness into the smile she gave me. It was the kind of a smile that all at once makes a man remember he's of some account in the world. Builds up his self-respect, some way.

Her father came up from the barn, just as we were going in and grinned. ""H'y, kid. Stomach tell you Cora'd have hot cakes for breakfast?"

"No, but Hardin down at th' gas station did," I acknowledged a little sheepishly, while Cora laughed and fixed a place for me at the kitchen table.

For some queer reason—because they were so good to me and friendly, I guess—I wanted them to know that I hadn't been tearing around the night before, so I told them where Dot and I had gone; that I slept at her house but got out before her folks were up.

"Good thing you did," Mr. Gost said dryly. "Gone out on your ear, probably, if the old man had caught you and thought he'd have you for a meal. He's tight—that one. Tight."

And then, stirring his coffee with his spoon and looking down through his straggling mustache, "That girl of his—Dot—she's a looker, all right, but—I'd go kinda slow on her, kid, if you intend staying 'round these parts very long. She's—well, she's . . ."

Cora said quietly: "I wouldn't, Dad. We don't know anything about Dot, except what folks say—and people always talk about a girl as pretty as she is. And, after all, if Ebby wants to go with her, that's his business, isn't it?"

But, she didn't look at me and I didn't look at her. Her father just grunted and shoved back his chair. After I was through eating, he took me down to the barn and showed me the loft where the hired man slept and waited till I put my things away in the little dresser with the wash bowl and pitcher on it. When I'd finished, we went out over the farm together.

It certainly was a swell place. There were so many stones on our farm back in York State that the cows had to wear shin-guards, but here, the pastures were like green velvet and the first crop of hay was almost up to my waist. And the corn . . .! The prettiest thing anyone ever saw—acres of it, little green shoots, in rows as straight as the part in a man's hair.

The corn with its tall green stalks and yellow tassels waving—tassels the color of Dot's hair, started me dreaming and I thought: "A hell of a lot I would care for Hollywood if I could have a place like this with Dot waiting at the house for me, like Cora does for her father."

That was when I began to dream of making Dot fall for me as I had fallen for her; make her forget the Hollywood stuff, and settle down.

Chapter Three

IT WAS grand at Gost's. I had never met a man I liked any better than old man Gost. He couldn't have been better to me if I'd been the son he'd always wanted and never had.

As for Cora, the way she was with her father would have shown anyone what kind of a kid she was. Laughing and kidding with him as though he'd been a boy, and keeping that house so clean a guy could eat off the floor. Her kitchen was always shining and full of good smells, and the big east windows were always filled with flowers. Her father said she could stick a piece of dead wood in the ground and make it grow. She was so full of energy and life herself, I guess, that she sort of breathed it into the things she touched.

I knew she liked me. Cora was too honest to keep a thing like that out of her eyes. And I liked her so much that there were times when I almost wished I'd never seen Dot. But I had. Dot was in my blood . . . I couldn't get her out.

My two weeks at the farm ran into three—a month. There was cultivating to do, the oats were coming on.

Mr. Gost was a driver, but he drove himself as hard as he drove me. He never was ugly, and always, there was Cora to laugh and kid, and fill me with the kind of food a man likes.

And there was—Dot.

If she'd had me going that first night—before two weeks were over, she had me crazy!

As soon as supper was over nights, I'd beat it down to the filling station and hang around till she was off duty, and we could go somewhere together.

Cora knew where I was heading all right, but she never said a word, and after that first day, Mr. Gost didn't either. Sometimes, he'd even let me use his car to take Dot to a dance somewhere, or to a show.

There were times when I felt like a heel, going off and not taking Cora, but—she was no wall flower. Often, when I was with Dot, we'd run into her and some of the guys from the farms around, dancing, and she'd nod and smile or wave her hand. But we never double-dated. I had sense enough to know her father wouldn't have let her.

The girls didn't have much to do with Dot, nor she with them. And—I was just as glad. I wanted her to myself. Dot went to my head like raw gin; but she knew how to put me in my place. She could take care of herself all right! A whole lot better than I could.

She had it down to a science—leading a fellow on until he was almost out of his head—and keeping him that way. And it wasn't costing her a thing. Me . . . it was nearly killing me!

It got so I fairly hated the nights when I was going to see her—and couldn't wait for them. By the time supper was on the table, the good hot suppers that no one could cook better than Cora, I was so nervous I couldn't eat. And if I made myself eat for fear of hurting Cora's feelings, I had to beat it out back of the barn and throw up. I couldn't keep food on my stomach.

There isn't very much a man won't do for a woman, when he's that crazy about her. Some have even committed murder. What I did for Dot wasn't quite that bad, but it was bad enough, God knows.

I had been at Gost's about six weeks, with the corn growing like magic and the oats turning every day yellower in the hot summer sun, when, one Friday morning, Mr. Gost asked me to go over across the creek with him to look at an old farm he had that had been lying fallow for years. At the last minute, Cora went along.

I had a date with Dot that night for a barn dance in a village down the way and, passing the gas station, I saw her standing in the door of the lunchroom, the sun on her yellow hair. She was kidding one of the truck drivers and didn't see us. Just as we passed, he caught her and kissed her on the mouth. She slapped him all right, but—she laughed.

I was wild. I'd have jumped out then and there and started a fight, if Mr. Gost hadn't planked his foot down on the gas.

"Be yourself, son," he said dryly. "Start fighting every guy who's kissed Dot Schmitt and you'll have one of these here marathons on your hands."

"I know how you feel, Ebby," Cora said, "but—she didn't have to laugh, did she?" Her face was red as fire under its tan, and she kept her grey eyes straight ahead.

I wanted to get mad at her for saying that, but no one could get mad at Cora. And I knew what Dot had been doing with that truck driver, because she'd done it so often with me, leading him on—making a fool of him.

The only trouble with me was—I loved her. I couldn't take kisses unless she'd give them to me. I didn't want them any other way. I wanted her to marry me, but I'd never dared put it in words before—even to myself, until that night—and I wouldn't have then, except for what happened out at the old farm.

It had been a nice place in its time; seventy-five acres or so, with a little patch of timber on it, and a creek running down through the pasture land. But it was in bad shape; fences down, thistles and sorrel choking out the grass, and the buildings were a mess.

While her father was out poking around the barns, Cora and I went into the house. It was pretty bad—sagging floors and broken plaster, and windows out. But there was a big kitchen that got the morning sun, and a sitting room with a fireplace large enough to burn a whole tree, it seemed to me. Yes, rundown as that old place was, it gave me a queer, kind of scared feeling—it was the kind of a house that looked as if a lot of living had gone on in it, and it sure seemed a sin to have it standing there empty and neglected.

Cora almost went into hysterics over the place, running around looking at this and that, telling how this wall could be torn out, and another one built; scraping off the paint to show the old walnut woodwork that was underneath.

But, in the midst of it all, she stopped suddenly. We were standing in what must have been a child's room. There was a little old trundle bed, all dirty and broken, pushed over against the wall. And a baby's chair, with one leg off, in the middle of the mildewed floor.

"Ebby," she said, and her face was as white as the tan would let it get, "I'm going to say something to you. You'll think I'm pretty awful, but I've got to say it anyway.

"Ebby, Dad likes you. He says you're the best hand he ever had, and a born farmer. He—he wants you to stay with us—as long as you want. And I—I like you—too. I—I more than like you, Ebby. I ought to be ashamed to say it—but someway—I'm not. I'm—proud to. And—it's because I do—like you that I can, I guess. Because—I don't want to see you—go wrong. And—you are, Ebby! Oh, you are! It's—Dot. Oh, don't look at me like that . . . I know you're crazy about her—but—she isn't your kind! Can't you see it, Eb? Can't you—feel it? She—she wouldn't make any man a good wife; it isn't in her. . . ."

"You're down on Dot," I said sullenly. "Everyone's down on her because she's pretty and wants a good time—wants to get out of that hole she's in and see the world. We're going to Hollywood, soon's I get money enough together. We're going to be married and go to Hollywood together. She—she loves me."

"How long would she love you, once she got to Hollywood," Cora asked bitterly, "and how long would you keep her?

"Oh, Ebby, Ebby, you're such a fool! Such a blind, stubborn fool! If she loves you and you love her, then marry her—and stay here. This place could be—such a sweet place! Dad would let you have it rent free and help you till you got it started, if I asked him. And—I would!

"I—I can't bear to see you spoil your life—throw it away! I . . ." her voice broke into a sob, her lips quivered. "I . . . just can't! There are other men in the world—I'll find one sometime and he'll make me happy, but—I—I want you to be happy too, Ebby—not just—used while you're needed, and thrown away . . .!"

Her little hands were over her mouth trying to hide its trembling. I took them away and, leaning down, kissed her.

"I think you're the grandest kid I've ever known," I said, "and the bravest. I don't want to go to Hollywood, and you know it. This place suits me—swell. It's just—that Dot's so set on going. But—tonight—I'll tell her about this—the farm and what you said about your Dad's helping me get a start. If she stays, will you be friendly with her, Cora—and with me? Will you?"

"If she'll let me, you know I will, Eb. And—I'll always be your friend, as long as you want me."

I went out where her father was then. She was crying, and I knew she didn't want me to see her. I was nearly crying myself. I felt, someway, as though I'd been to church.

Chapter Four

I'D NEVER seen Dot as pretty as she was that night, nor as gay. She had on a thin silk dress that clung to her when she moved, and her hair was as soft around her pink and white face as a halo, and as shining. And her lips asked for kisses so plainly, I hurt. I could hardly wait to get her in the car before my arm went round her.

"That guy today . . ." I began, "he had a lot of nerve. . . ."

"What guy?" she asked. And when I told her, she shrugged. I couldn't get jealous of Dot over other men kissing her. I was too busy wondering whether she forgot my kisses as easily. But when I tried to tell her so, she pulled my face around to hers, for the first time since I'd known her, of her own free will, and put her mouth hard on mine. I nearly ran the car into the ditch. By the time we had reached the dance, she had kissed me twice. And I had pulled her dress aside and put my lips where I'd wanted to ever since that first day I'd met her.

I didn't need the beer that was free as water, nor the gin that half the crowd was drinking, to make me drunk. I was drunk already—on her.

Generally Dot liked to stay at a dance as long as there was any music to dance to, but tonight she seemed as restless and eager to go as I was. And she was the one who suggested driving out on the dirt road to the cottonwood grove.

I knew she meant to be pretty good to me, or she never would have suggested that, and my hands were shaking so I had to clench the driving wheel, to steady them.

We had been there before once or twice. It was such a pretty place, and so still, with the moon shining down through the branches, and a hungry little brook back in behind the bushes somewhere, that was always swishing against its stones.

Parked in the shade of the cottonwoods, I put my arms around her and drew her close. Then I kissed her, with the warmth of her body in my arms setting everything in me on fire. I'd wanted her ever since the first minute I'd seen her—but never as I wanted her then. I didn't ask her to marry me—I begged her, my voice so thick I could hardly talk.

"Please, Dot—I love you! I can't stand it, wanting you the way I do . . . it's driving me crazy! Let's forget Hollywood. It's a lot of hooey anyway. Even if we got there, we'd probably starve to death before we got a chance.

"Gost has a farm he'll let me work. It's a swell farm and he'll help us get a start—Cora said he would. I—I like to farm, Dot. I'd be a good farmer, and I'd make you a living. And—you've no idea how swell I'd be to you—always. Not the way lots of farmers are to their wives—but—swell. . . ."

The way Dot yanked herself out of my arms, you certainly wouldn't have thought it was marriage I was proposing to her. It was the first time I'd ever seen her really mad—at me.

Her voice wasn't husky; it was as thin as a knife, and with an edge to it as sharp.

"Me—settling down in a dump like this! Me—a farmer's wife! What is this? A joke? I live on a farm. I was born and raised on one. You've seen it. You've seen my mother. They say I look like she did when she was young. Well, if I thought I'd ever look like she does now, I'd kill myself. A farmer's wife! Say, if that was what I wanted to be, I could have the pick of half a dozen right now—with farms of their own, too . . . not charity ones—not rented ones!

"A farmer's wife! So that's what all that big talk of yours sifts down to, is it? Bound for Hollywood—bound for the movies—and letting yourself be side-tracked in a hick burg like this!

"Oh, quit pawing me! A girl gets sick of being pawed all the time. If that's the best you can offer, peddle it to Cora. Everyone knows she wants you. Me—I'm breaking my back over no man's washtub. I'm—going to Hollywood! I'm . . ."

Her voice broke. She threw her arms around my neck and buried her head in my shoulder. She was crying. I'd never seen Dot cry before. The moon turned her yellow hair to a silvery fluff. She seemed frail, clinging to me, and pitiful—and young.

"Ebby!" she wailed, "Oh, Ebby, and I thought you were different . . .! I—I—thought you loved me! And—it was Cora, all the time! She put you up to this. She knew I wouldn't marry you if you went on a farm! She's been trying to get you away from me all along, and—now she has!

"You were ready to go to Hollywood before she got hold of you—you wanted to go. You wanted me too—but now. . . ."

I was crying myself then—blubbering through my talk: "It isn't true—you know it isn't, Dot. I'm—mad about you. I'm so crazy that I can't sleep, or eat. I think about you all the time! Dream about—having you. Listen to my heart, the way it's pounding! Look at me—how crazy I am. . . .

"I'd take you to Hollywood—tomorrow, if I could. I'd do anything you asked me to do—anything . . . It's only knowing how to do it—finding a way. . . ."

She lifted her head. Her eyes were huge in the soft darkness, and her lips were so close to mine, I could feel the warmth of them, could feel their soft damp quivering.

"You—you mean that, Ebby? You mean—if I could find a way to get some money, you'd—do it? Or—or—is that just more talk—just—promises you—wouldn't keep?"

My lips were on hers now, pressing fierce and close and hard, and I was saying down through them: "Try me—try me and see!" And when she pulled herself free at last, I could hardly hear her voice for the pounding in my ears. It was low too—as though she were afraid of hearing it herself—almost a whisper.

"Tomorrow's Saturday—I'm working late—you know that. And Hardin's wife's sick—he won't be at the place at all. He's having Bill Law—that nit wit from the village—take his place. There's two hundred dollars in the safe now—and there'll be twice that by eight tomorrow night.

"Bill's the biggest coward in town—scared if a mouse jumps at him. If—if you'd cover your face so no one would know you, and watch your chance. . . ."

I wouldn't let her finish. I was sitting up straight as a ramrod, and as stiff and still. I felt as though that creek I could hear back in the trees was running ice cold, right down my spine.

"But—that's robbery!" I gasped. "That's—a stick-up. It's the pen if they catch me. Dot, I never stole a cent in my life! I'm no thief. I—I couldn't do that! I—just couldn't. Don't ask me. . . ."

She was sitting as stiff as I was now, and her eyes weren't soft any more, but two lumps of black coal, hot with the fires behind them. "Who's asking you to be a thief?" she said sullenly. "We'd pay it back, wouldn't we? As soon as we got to making money, we could send it back, and no one would be the wiser.

"And anyway, I didn't expect you'd do it when I told you. You're just a bluff, like all the rest of the men. You'd do anything for me! Yeah! Don't make me laugh.

"Start this bus, and—get me home. And—don't come hanging round me any more, because it won't do you any good. I'm hunting a *man* from now on—not a green kid trying to be wise. A man who wants me bad enough to risk something for me . . . who isn't too big a cheap skate to be willing to pay for what he gets.

"And when I find him—he'll get—plenty. All the things you've wanted and haven't had; what you could have had tonight, if you'd loved me enough."

Back in Chicago, I'd spent a couple of nights in a flop-house. There'd been a poor devil there who'd had his dope stolen by some other bum who wanted it as badly as he did, but was smarter.

He'd bawled, straight through eight solid hours. Not loud, but like a heart-broken kid. Choking and sobbing. They caught him, just before daylight, trying to kill the other guy, and sent him to the lock-up. And he was still bawling.

I guess I wanted what Dot said she might have given me, as much as that other fellow had wanted his "snow." And I could have taken it. I was six feet two, with muscles like iron, but—I wasn't meant for stuff like that. I wasn't bad. I was just a kid, girl crazy for the first time in his life. And up against the fact that if I wanted Dot, this was my one chance to get her—and my last.

One look at Dot, and I could see there wasn't any fooling about her—that she meant what she said.

Oh, she knew how to handle me all right . . . her body warm in my arms, her lips hot against mine, saying over and over: "We'll pay it back, Ebby, darling. We'll pay it back—you don't have to worry about that!"

Pleading, with that husky low voice of hers: "Love me, Ebby! Love me, hard! I've never let you love me before—like this . . . I've never let any man love me like people think I have . . . like I'm letting you—now!

"Marriage doesn't mean anything—just a lot of words preachers say. We can be married after we get to Hollywood—but—now—tonight . . . This is ours, Ebby—yours! I promised you, didn't I? I'm keeping my promise the way you're keeping yours.

"My, but your lips are hard, Ebby—they hurt me. Your arms hurt. But—Hollywood—it's there before us— Can't you see it, Ebby? Can't you hear it—calling?"

"I can see you," I cried fiercely, "and—that's all I care to see . . ." and buried her in the smother of my arms, while the little brook lapped hungrily behind its sheltering trees, and a night owl called eerily from the branches over our head.

When we started back home, hours later, we had it pretty well planned—or rather, Dot had. I could see, even crazy as I was, that this wasn't any new idea of hers. And I had a sinking feeling that maybe she had been planning for it ever since that first night when we had driven in to the movies and left Hardin's money at the Fernbank Trust for him. I could even remember what she had said about four hundred dollars taking us to Hollywood—and about Hardin's never missing it. But—I was in for it now, and I didn't dare let myself think of anything but the job that was before me.

Chapter Five

THE way Dot had it figured, I was to cover my face, so Bill wouldn't know me, and wait in the bushes across the road from the gas station until the coast was clear. Then, as soon as I got the money, beat it toward town, so he would think I was heading for the tracks.

Up the road, a half a mile or so was a hollow log. I was to ram the money down deep into that and jump the fence, beating it back to Gost's, wading the creek, for fear some of the wise-guy farmers would put their dogs on the trail.

The rest of it was easy enough. Dot could pick up the money on her way home—no one would try to pin a thing like that on her. And if the troopers came after me, because I was a drifter, they couldn't find anything—because there wouldn't be anything to find. Dot seemed to think maybe I'd be sore about her taking the money. That gave me the only laugh I'd had that night. It wasn't a very pleasant one.

"I'm doing this for you—not myself," I said. "I got this far on my own power, didn't I? I'll get the rest of the way the same. The money is yours. But—we're paying it back, mind you. We're paying it back."

"Maybe you'd better get it first," she said tartly. And we were pretty still for the rest of the way home.

By the time I left her at her gate, though, she was sweet again, and her arms around me were so soft, when we said good-bye; her lips so warm, it was hard for me to think of much of anything but her. I was ashamed to let her see how scared I was.

I had rented a car from the village garage, and I had to walk back to Gost's place. All the way, with the sky turning grey in the east and the birds twittering from the trees overhead, I kept saying to myself, the words timing themselves to the thump, thump, thump of my heels on the pavement: "We'll pay it back—we'll pay it back—we'll pay it back."

What I was most afraid of wasn't the actual taking of that money, it was—afterward. Living with the sin of theft on my soul. But I was worried about that disguise business . . . just tying a handkerchief across my face, didn't sound so good to me. What if Bill wasn't as yellow as Dot seemed to think he would be, and put up a fight and yanked it loose? What if . . .

The more I thought of it, the surer I was that I'd have to think up something else. . . .

As it turned out, I didn't have to do much thinking.

It seems to me that sometimes the devil sees there aren't many stones put in the way of sin. There certainly weren't in the way of mine.

It was so early when I reached the barn that I'd had time to change into my overalls and get at the milking before old man Gost came down from the house.

"The only hired man I ever had who didn't have to be kicked out of bed," he grinned. "But—I'll take over the milking if you'll go up to the house and help Cora out. The kitchen stovepipe's filled with soot and won't draw. She sent me after you."

Cora's face was flushed when I came in, and her brown hair, generally so neat and smooth, was tousled. "It would happen," she cried, "on baking day! Take it down back of the barn, will you, Ebby, and shake it out?"

There must have been a bushel of soot in the damn' thing, and it flew all over. When I took it back up to the house, Cora ran and got a mirror and held it up in front of me, laughing so she could hardly hold it.

I looked like the end man in a minstrel show. All that was white about me was my eyeballs and my teeth. My own mother wouldn't have known me.

I took just one look, and knew that my disguise worries were over.

Cora showed me how to clean myself up, with lard to loosen the soot and soft cloths to wipe it off. When I insisted, she gave me the stuff and let me take it back to the barn with me.

I used only part of it. The rest I hid away, with a pan of soot I brought up from the pile below, to have ready.

That Saturday was as hot a day as we'd had all summer. And it seemed as though there was no end to the work. What with the heat and nerves, not sleeping any the night before, trying to plan what was facing me and being afraid to, by the time supper was ready, I was all in and looked it.

Mr. Gost was afraid he had worked me too hard and came up from the cellar with a pitcher of cider. "Here, it'll put hair on your chest, son," he said and made me drink it.

I didn't like cider very well, but I was glad when I got it down. I certainly needed something to buck me up.

Cora thought I was worried over Dot, and asked me, when her father was out of the room, if I'd seen her the night before and if I'd said anything to her about the farm.

I mumbled to her something about not having a chance yet, and pretended the cider was making me cough. I was glad when supper was over so that I could grab a magazine and say I was going down to the barn and turn in. Cora's eyes were so honest and so straight, and they looked through a fellow so!

I took the cider with me and drank what was left of it—every drop, and then—I got to work.

I had a gun—the hammer was broken and there weren't any bullets for it. I'd picked it out of a trash heap where some bum had thrown it and stuffed it into my roll, the way a kid picks up nails and wire and string, and crams his pockets with them. I'd almost forgotten it. But after I'd rubbed my face and hands with the soot, and changed my clean overalls for a pair of dirty ones, I took it out and stood with it, staring at myself in my bleary, cracked mirror.

Talk about my own mother not knowing me, I didn't know myself, nor—want to.

It was only about a mile down the road to the gas station, but I took a roundabout way, out through the lane and across the back pasture. Then I catty-cornered up through the wood lot. I wasn't running the risk of anyone seeing me, besides, it wasn't dark yet. I wanted it to be good and dark before I did what I was out to do.

If it hadn't been for what happened between Dot and me the night before, I wouldn't have done it at all. But—weren't Dot and I as good as married? I asked myself miserably. "She hadn't welched on her end of the bargain . . . I'd be a fine sort of a guy to welch on mine . . . !"

Across from the gas station was a bunch of willow trees. They made a good screen and I waited behind them until the coast was clear. I was so scared my feet felt as though they were walking on air. Numb.

I went in through the back door of the lunch room, that Dot had left open for me, and headed straight for the door into the filling station. Even expecting me and all, Dot didn't know me at first. Her mouth would have opened on a scream, that would have queered us all, if I hadn't stopped her.

As for Bill in the filling station. . . .

The whole thing was so easy, it scares me even now, to think of it. He just took one look at my ragged overalls and black face, and powerful shoulders—and that empty gun of mine sticking out in front of him, and I didn't have to say a word. His hands went up so high and so fast they almost carried him with them. He opened the safe for me himself. All I had to do was to point at it, and when he got it open, he fainted, like a woman, crumpled up and flat on the floor.

I couldn't see any money lying loose in the safe, but I could see an envelope, like the one Hardin had given Dot to take into Fernbank for him, with the edges of some greenbacks sticking out. That must be what I was after, I decided, and I grabbed it.

Bill was beginning to stir when I stumbled over him and made for the door, but he was still too groggy to know what had happened or to give an alarm. And Dot, minding her own business back in the lunch room, wasn't supposed to know anyway.

I had reached the rotten log, had the money hidden as we had agreed, Dot and I, and was over the fence and headed for the creek, when the first car whizzed down the pike, and that one going toward the gas station, not coming from it!

Luck sure had been with me. Devil's luck. The whole thing—from the time I'd darted across the road, until I was headed back to Gost's, hadn't taken over ten minutes. If it hadn't been for the black stuff on my hands and face, I could almost have made myself believe it hadn't happened at all. That I'd dreamed it.

But there wasn't any use trying to kid myself. It had happened all right, and the quicker I got where I could clean myself up, the better for me.

The moon hadn't come out, and it was dark as pitch, around the out buildings—even up at the house, except for a light in Cora's room.

I was looking up at that, I guess, when I stumbled over a pile of boards out back of the chicken house and sent them clattering. The way those darn' chickens cackled and crowed and squawked! And Tige, Gost's old hunting dog, that slept in the kitchen nights, letting out a bay that could have waked the dead!

I actually fell up that ladder to my loft room! I only stopped to light a lamp, before I was greasing my face and hands with lard, and rubbing at them, with the cloths I had saved. I expected every minute to hear Gost down below, yelling for me, or maybe coming up after me.

There'd been a weasel after the chickens lately, and we'd promised ourselves we'd go after it the next time we heard it, with a shotgun and Tige.

But—it wasn't Gost who came. It was—Cora.

I heard the kitchen door slam, and her quick running feet on the gravel of the drive, and her voice calling my name. I worked like mad, but I wasn't quick enough. Between hurry and fright and not having lard enough or cloths enough, I must have looked like a zebra when Cora stuck her head up over the end of the ladder.

She'd been talking ever since she came through the barn door—seeing my light and all, and knowing I was up and dressed, by the way I was walking around, and she kept on talking until surprise choked it back:

"Ebby! Oh, Ebby! It's that weasel again—Dad told me to bring the gun down to you . . . he isn't dressed. Hurry up and we'll go after him . . . I let Tige out, he's down by the hen house now.

"Ebby! Why don't you answer me? I'm coming up . . ."

There wasn't any door to my loft room. I met her at the top of the ladder, my hands black, my face covered with grease and striped like a zebra's, the cleaning rag in my hands.

She took just one good look at me and nearly fell down the ladder.

"Ebby! For heaven's sake! What are you trying to do to yourself? Look at your face! And your hands! They're blacker than they were this morning! Hollywood's sure got you all right, when you spend your spare time making up like that! And I've been calling you ever since I left the house! Why didn't you answer?"

When people are scared as I was, they do funny things. I did one then—I got red mad.

"Answer!" I yelled, "Why should I answer? Isn't there such a thing as hours round this dump of yours? Or—privacy? This is supposed to be my room, isn't it? If you don't like the way I look, get out of it!"

And because I had to explain that black on my face someway or other, I grabbed at the first excuse I could think of.

"Sure I heard that weasel. Do you think I'm deaf? That's where I got this damn' stuff all over me, going after him. Fell in it, out back of the barn . . ."

Cora had a temper of her own. Her face drained white, then went red as fire. "Fell in it? You must have rolled in it, like Tige!" she snapped, and was down on the barn floor before I could say a word. I could hear the click of her heels running over the loose boards, and their crunch on the gravel to the house. You could tell she was mad by the quick way she was walking.

Before I got myself clean at last and the dirty rags rolled up in my dirty overalls and shoved under the bed until I could burn them, I was sick as a dog.

But I slept all right. I hadn't slept a wink the night before and I was so tired I couldn't do anything else.

Chapter Six

SUNDAY morning was my morning to do the chores alone. I didn't go up to the house until the milking was done and the can on the stand for the creamery pick-up. When I came in at last, breakfast was on the table, and Mr. Gost was eating. Cora was at the stove baking cakes.

He said, "Hello, son!" and grinned at me, but Cora never looked up, not even when she planked a fresh pile of cakes down before me, and filled my coffee cup.

I didn't look at her either. Just took the syrup that her father shoved toward me, and poured it on my plate. I didn't know what I was eating and didn't care. I was numb with shame.

I was still mussing with my food and Cora was pouring a fresh batch of batter on the griddle, when a car roared up to the door, and a highway cop, in his khaki uniform, banged at the screen.

Believe me, looking up from my plate and seeing him there sent my stomach right down into my shoes. It wasn't shame I was numb with then—but fright.

I had to do a lot of things in the months that were to come—like jumping off a plane with the rip-cord of my 'chute sticking, or riding a fear crazed horse across a ring of fire, but I never was half as scared as I was then.

Gost knew him. "Hello, Dan," he said, and went over to the door to let him in.

The fellow wasn't really big, but to me he filled the room, and his eyes, in his wind-burned face, were sharp as steel, taking in the kitchen; flying to me and staying there.

Mr. Gost answered their look chuckling a little. "That's Ebby. He works for me. Not looking for him, are you, Dan?"

The officer laughed a little dryly. "Wrong color," he said. "Guy I'm looking for's black. Hardin's filling station was robbed last night between eight and nine o'clock—four hundred and fifty bucks. A nigger. Dot Schmitt and Bill Law both saw him. Dot says he was a little fellow, but Bill swears he was big as a house. Just checking up, that's all. Finding out if anyone's seen a coon round these parts in the last day or so.

"Don't suppose you folks have, have you?"

He was looking straight at me, and I mumbled something, God knows what it was, and tried to keep my fingers from shaking. Mr. Gost said, "Well, no!" but Cora didn't say anything at all. She had dropped the coffee pot, and was on her knees mopping up the mess on the floor.

Her father said, "Good mind to have you pinched for that, kid, now we got a cop handy." And then, "Say! Wasn't it about that time the chickens made such a fuss? Niggers and chickens—don't they go together? Maybe he came back after a hen to celebrate?"

The officer was half through the screen, but he stopped at that. "Th' guy who lifted that dough wasn't snooping around for fryers," he said grimly. "But—maybe it wouldn't hurt to give th' place a look, at that. Go over th' barns—he might be hiding out."

I thought of the pile of soot in back of the big barn, and those overalls and dirty rags stuffed under my mattress, and if I'd been scared before, I was paralyzed then.

I don't know what Cora saw in my face—it must have been plenty, for the first thing I knew, she was standing between me and the door, saying to her father, in a voice sharper than I'd ever heard her use to him before: "Dad! That was a weasel after the chickens last night, and you know it: Didn't you send me down to get Ebby, and didn't Ebby and I see him ourselves!

"All you want is someone to talk to! You ought to be ashamed keeping Dan like this when he's in a hurry!"

The cop laughed, and Mr. Gost said sheepishly, "Guess you're right, Cora. Guess you're right," and walked with him to his car, calling back over his shoulder to me: "Going down in th' back pasture, Eb. Finish your breakfast and come along. There's a broken fence we've got to mend."

I tried to say, "Yes, sir," but my lips were so dry and stiff all I could get through them was a mumble.

Cora waited till the police car had rattled out of the drive, and her father was on his way to the barn, then she came over to the table where I was, and stood there, staring down at me.

Her face was as white as a piece of paper, except for two red spots that burned high on her cheeks. Her eyes were blazing.

"So—that's it," she said. "That's the pile of soot you stumbled into last night! A—a robber, and—I lied to help you! A thief, and I—I—loved you!"

Her voice broke, her eyes filled. "Oh, what *did* you do it for, Ebby? What *made* you? If you needed money that badly, why didn't you ask for it? Dad would have trusted you . . . you didn't have to—steal . . ."

"It wasn't for myself," I blurted, before I knew what I was saying. "I didn't want it for myself, Cora! I . . ."

I stopped myself there, but it was too late. Cora finished for me, her eyes hard as nails.

"You don't have to tell me, Ebby. I'll tell you. You bought Dot Schmitt with it, didn't you? Dot—and Hollywood. Well—I wish you luck with both of them. You—you're going to need it.

"Oh, I'm not going to tell on you, you needn't be afraid. But—get out of here, can't you, and leave me alone! The sight of you makes me—sick!"

She was crumpled in a chair when I left her, her head on her arm and the dirty breakfast dishes all around her, but I wasn't making her half as sick as I was making myself.

I wasn't to see Dot until night and I didn't dare go over to the gas station because I knew the cops would be around. I spent the morning fixing fences; doing odd jobs around the place, and when I came up to the house at noon, I found old man Gost frying potatoes over the kitchen stove, with an apron tied around him, and—Cora gone.

"Don't know what got into her," he worried. "Maybe she's sick or something! Came in and found her all packed, and waiting for th' bus to th' city. She's going to visit my sister for a spell. Says she may be gone a month!

"T'aint that I don't want her to have some fun, poor kid, but —it ain't like her . . . being flighty—fly-up-the-creek, this way!

"If I thought . . ." He looked at me, and his eyes weren't friendly then, but hard as flint. "If I thought there'd been anything going on between you and her . . . anything I didn't know . . ."

I met his look with one as straight as his. "If there had been, I'd give you a gun and let you shoot me," I said. And I just stood there and let his eyes search mine, until they saw the truth and quit.

One thing at least I didn't have to be afraid of. One sin I didn't have on my soul!

But I knew I'd have to get out . . . that Cora wouldn't come back until I had gone, and the sooner I made the break, the better.

That night Dot and I talked it over. She had her brother's car, and we went out to the willow grove again.

I'd started with some crazy idea in my head of asking Dot to give up the money and let me send it back to Hardin. I never even suggested it.

That money was just a loan to Dot. Something we were going to pay back in some misty, dim future. Hadn't we said so? And once alone with her, her arms around me, her lips on mine, it seemed almost like that to me, too. Not half as bad as it had been with Cora's bitter words whipping at me.

Dot was so excited she talked a steady stream, and my idea of blacking up was a huge joke. She laughed about it. That didn't set very well with me.

"It wasn't very funny to me when Cora caught me washing it off," I said sullenly. "Heard me when I came in, and thought it was a weasel after the chickens. She came down to the barn with the gun . . . found me with half my face covered with soot . . ."

That silenced her for a minute, then she laughed again, a sly laugh that slid over me the way her eyes did.

"And—so what? You lied out of it, didn't you? Sure. I thought so. Cora's too green to get wise, and even if she did—she wouldn't tell—on you. You know that and you know why . . . because she's fallen for you."

She must have seen my face or felt my arms stiffen, for she didn't go any farther with *that*. And she was as keen on my getting out of the place, and getting out herself, as I was. But getting out—even with money to do it on, had to be planned. She was all for going right away and together, but I couldn't see that.

In the first place, I wouldn't use any of that money. Not one damn' cent. And in the second, everyone in town knew that neither Dot nor I had one penny to rub against another. Oh, I argued a long time, but she kept on pleading, pushing herself up close to me, promising big things we'd do together in Hollywood.

"I hitch-hiked into town," I told her finally, "and I'll hitch-hike out. But—it's going to be pretty hard for you to explain railroad fare to Hollywood, particularly right now. You'll have to wait till I'm settled. I'll send you a letter then—one you can show around. One that will show folks we're going to be married, and make them think I'm sending you the money for your fare.

"And for heaven's sake, don't use any more of that roll than you have to. The less you use, the less we're going to have to pay back."

We said good-bye that night, because I had made up my mind before another day came around, I'd be on my way west. Dot cried and clung to me; gave me her lips and her arms and her—love.

At least I've always wanted to think it was her love she gave me—it made what came afterward less hard to take.

I lied to Cora's father. I couldn't just walk out on him without a word. Told him I'd heard from a friend of mine in Hollywood, that there was a chance for me, if I'd come on. But telling him what a swell guy I thought he was, and how much I appreciated what he and Cora had done for me, wasn't any lie. I guess he knew that, by the way I choked up, and hung onto his hand.

I wouldn't take the five dollar bonus he offered me with my wages. I needed the money badly enough, but—I wasn't that low. He drove me into town, and I caught a westbound freight. Like a rat scurrying out of a chicken coop, I didn't even have the nerve to look back at the town.

I hadn't been three days on the road before some bums rolled me for my money. Then in Texas, I was run in on a vagrancy charge and had to spend ten days in jail, working out my fine. By the time I'd reached the end of my trail, I was thin as a lathe, hollow-eyed and stoney broke.

But—I was in Hollywood!

And because I didn't have it coming to me, I suppose, I got the breaks.

Hanging 'round the casting office one day, with my belt pulled to the last notch, a cigarette I'd bummed on the street, lopping out of my mouth, a guy came along and spotted me. A thick, heavy set oldish guy, with a bald head and a fat paunch and a big black cigar.

He stopped in front of me and gave me the eye, from my broken shoes to my shabby hat and sunken cheeks.

"Hungry, aren't you, kid?" he said, and when he grinned, I saw a gold tooth way back in his mouth, shining.

"What do you think?" I answered sullenly, and watched that gold tooth, wishing I had one too and could cash in on it for a cup of coffee and a good hot meal.

"I think you ought to have your pants kicked," and his mouth came together with a snap. "But it just happens I need a tough looking young husky like you in a gang scene; five bucks a day and your grub. If you want a screen test, come on. I'll give you a chance."

That was my start. For the little fat guy's name was Aaron Matzir, and he was a casting director.

The work I was on hung over for a couple of weeks. After that, there was some stunt stuff right up my line—trick riding. And after that a football play. Nothing that any real actor would have looked at twice, but—it meant a lot to me.

And the money I was making meant more. I'd got the cheapest room I could find, and the cheapest grub. Outside of a pair of shoes that would keep my feet off the ground, and a suit I'd picked up at a second hand store, I hadn't spent a cent. Not even a dime for a glass of beer.

That four hundred and fifty dollars of Hardin's was riding me like the old man of the sea. I never slept a night that I didn't dream of it, and that look in Cora's eyes when she faced me across the breakfast table and called me a thief. I got to wondering if I'd ever be able to wake up in the morning without that sick, guilty feeling.

Chapter Seven

I MISSED Dot, and wanted her. As soon as I heard of the football picture, I wrote her, just as I'd planned to do, but—it was Cora I dreamed of nights. And I—hated it.

I wanted to forget Cora and the farm. And the cows coming down the lane at milking time, with old Tige barking at their heels.

I wanted to forget the smell of ham sizzling on the kitchen stove and old man Gost grinning up at me and saying, "Hello, son. Sit down and eat."

I wrote to Cora, too. Wrote her twice, and tore each letter up as soon as it was written. I knew there was no sense in stirring *that* up. I was still the thief she'd called me, and the more she hated me, the easier it would be for her.

As for me? Well—I'd picked Dot, hadn't I? As soon as she came on, we'd be married. And—that would be—that.

But—it wasn't Dot who came—it was a letter. Air mailed and specialed, and almost, it seemed to me, before mine had had a chance to reach her. And she wasn't as careful what she said in hers as I'd been.

". . . I thought I'd never hear! I've watched every mail since you left. I'd have been on long ago, but that four hundred and fifty of Hardin's is too hot. I—don't dare spend it here—not a cent of it. Send me something I won't be scared to show—a money order—that will cover my fare. I'll pay it back when I get to Hollywood . . ."

And down at the bottom, crowded in like she'd thought of it the last minute: "I love you, Eb, and I'm saving all my kisses till I see you—remember those nights under the willows?"

I sent her the money order, dug down into that money I was hoarding to pay Hardin. I made it out for just enough to cover bus fare and food—not a cent more.

It wasn't the bus she took—not Dot. It was the Santa Fe—and a pullman. She'd wired me from Chicago that she was taking a train, and when to meet her, and I'd thought, "She's in a hurry," and was almost glad. But—a pullman!

I was waiting for her up where the day coaches came in, when I heard her call me. There she was, looking like a million dollars, with a brand new outfit from head to heels, and that soft, baby mouth of hers painted into a cupid's bow, and her hair bleached and waved into a silver-gilt frame for her baby face.

I wasn't mad then; I was just bowled over. Stunned. I felt like a bum standing there waiting for her to tip the porter. I was afraid to kiss her.

It wasn't until I saw the fancy luggage that I began to go haywire.

Hat boxes and suitcases and bags piled on the platform around her, so bright and shiny and new they dazzled me. And me knowing all the time where the money had come from that had bought them!

Stolen money—and spending it for things like that!

She saw the look I gave them, and her face went red. She was as mad as I was. "All right!" she snapped, "I bought them. And they're filled with clothes too—good ones.

"I told you once the only way I'd come to Hollywood—and I meant it. You and your measly bus fare! It got me to Chicago where I could spend that four hundred and fifty the way I wanted to spend it. And I did. I've got a hundred dollars left, and I'm keeping it until I get a job.

"That's what you stole it for, wasn't it?"

That was the first time she'd ever used the word "stole." It always had been "borrowed" before. And the way she said it was as naked and bare as a slap in the face. And I had to take it, because it was true.

I had to take a lot of things in the days to come. Things that didn't go down any better than that had.

I was sharing my room with another fellow. I couldn't have Dot there, so I had made a reservation for her at a cheap hotel until we could get married, and look for a flat together. I'd also fixed it up with Matzir to give her a screen test as soon as she got in.

She was so excited when I told her that she didn't even go to the hotel. Just sent her stuff, and went with me right over to the studio.

We took a taxi, and once in it, she forgot her mad and made me forget mine. Snuggling up close to me, oh'ing and ah'ing at everything we saw or passed; kissing me, laughing and crying like a kid.

And saying over and over: "It's Hollywood! I'm here—in Hollywood! I'm going to make good, Ebby! I'm going to make good—I'm going to make good . . ."

I couldn't hold the way she'd spent that money against her. She was like a child—with all the things she'd dreamed of coming true.

I didn't have any trouble getting her in to Matzir, and after he'd taken one good look at her, she didn't have any trouble getting a job.

Matzir took one good look at her and his pudgy hands flew to his tie to straighten it, and to push back the stray lock of hair he kept brushed over his bald spot.

"So . . . this is the little lady, eh?" he smirked, and his eyes that were cold as a dead fish's, as a general rule, lit up like little hot beads.

I didn't have to guess what he was thinking. I knew as well as though I'd seen inside him.

I had a hunch, even then, that he was falling for her. Before the day was over, it wasn't a hunch. I knew it. But I couldn't take it seriously enough to be jealous. Not of a little fat guy three times my age and bald. And married as well—to a wife who was the sister of the producer, and who could have had him fired if she'd got sore at him, as quickly as he could have fired Dot—or me.

And she wasn't trusting him any further than she could see him, either. She was always snooping round the studio, keeping tab on him. Turning up when no one expected her and pushing into his private office, no matter who was there, or what he was doing.

She was almost a head taller than Matzir and twenty pounds heavier. She had a heavy jaw and hennaed hair, and one of those big show window front effects, all plastered over with dangling, clanking jewelry.

Even the girls in the casting office were scared to death of her, and out on the sets she was as welcome as poison ivy.

It was almost funny seeing how even the poorest little extra steered clear of Matzir when she was around.

But she wasn't around that day, and Matzir made hay while the sun shone, I'm telling you.

While I worked, he took Dot all over the lot, showing her the sights as though she'd been a visiting celebrity, and he was with her when they gave her the screen test.

She passed with colors flying. I'd seen her just before she went into the studio. Her eyes looked as though there were a dozen candles burning behind them, and her hair was a gilt edged cloud.

Matzir took us out to dinner that night to celebrate. He didn't have the nerve to ask her without me that early in the game. Whether she'd have gone if he had, I don't know. I do know I'd never seen her so beautiful. Her eyes thrilling to real faces that had been only book faces to her before, and her red lips growing redder and redder until they out-crimsoned the rouge that covered them.

Matzir never took his eyes off her unless he had to, and all around us, I could see people staring and whispering behind their hands.

When we drove home at last, in some way or other, I got dropped off at my rooming house, and it was Matzir who took Dot to her hotel.

I was in such a daze by that time, I couldn't figure out whether Dot had maneuvered it that way or whether it was Matzir's idea. But—it was Matzir's car, and when he stopped in front of my place, and said in that bluff, cordial way of his: "It's late, kid. I'll see th' little lady home and save you the trip, if you'll trust me. She's promising material, young man. Very promising, I assure you . . ."

There was something about the way he said those last words—sort of smacking his lips over them, that kept making me madder and madder. And the fact that Dot had gone along with him, without putting up a holler . . .

Her first night in town, and ditching me . . . !

I stood it for about an hour, then I jumped a street car and went over to her hotel. It didn't take me more than fifteen minutes—I'd tried to get a place as near mine as I could—but I got there just in time to see Matzir's car, that had dumped me off over an hour before, pull up to the curb, and Dot get out of it, and run up the steps and through the revolving doors.

Matzir didn't see me, but I saw him leaning back against his cushions as his chauffeur drove him away. He was smiling, and his fat lips looked thick and wet as he passed beneath the street lamps.

Dot had gone up to her room when I reached the lobby, and I nearly pushed the elevator button in, I was so sore.

But after I saw Dot someway, my mad all left me. She was walking on air.

"He's promised me a job," she cried. "He's putting me on as an extra tomorrow, and then, soon as he starts casting for the next picture, he's giving me a part! A real part!

"Oh, Ebby, it's too good to be true! It's too grand! Don't spoil it by fighting . . . please don't! All we did was to go for a ride, honest—that's all! I love you! Gee, Ebby, look at me . . . can't you see I do?

"Take me in your arms—hold me close and tight and hard! Kiss me . . ."

Her eyes were like stars and her lips sweet as honey, and all through the still night hours, her arms held me as tight and close as mine held her, while I pushed the memory of Cora's face way back inside me, and dropped a curtain over it.

My mouth on Dot's had never been so hungry nor my kisses so fierce and hard.

Chapter Eight

BEFORE we left for the studio the next morning, I warned her about Matzir's wife.

"I've been in Hollywood long enough to know this is a tough game," I grudged, "and that pretty girls like you have to play your cards if you want to win, but—for Pete's sake, lay off the vamp stuff with that guy, Dot! It's dynamite!

"If his wife ever found out you were riding 'round with him alone for over an hour last night, you could kiss your chance at a job good-bye. And she's got eyes in the back of her head. I'm telling you . . ."

"Boy, she'll need them, to catch me," Dot grinned. "I'm wise to her kind and his, too. I've seen them before. A hamburger stand isn't the Brown Derby, but you'd be surprised the experience a girl can get working in one, if she keeps her eyes open.

"Hands off, Ebby. If Papa Matzir wants to be nice to me, that's my business. Here's one little lady that knows her way around."

I had to laugh the way she mocked Matzir's accent and his pompous, patronizing way, and I kept on laughing, through the first of those weeks that followed. Rather sick, side-twisted laughter, but laughter just the same.

It was funny, the way she kept that poor fish dangling after her, after twitching at the line enough to keep him hooked, but never drawing him in.

And the way she handled Mrs. Matzir . . . ! Oh, Dot was clever all right!

It hadn't taken the old dame very long to spot a new blonde around the studio. Maybe someone had passed her the word, you never can tell. It's a cut-throat business—Hollywood's.

But anyway, Dot hadn't been there two weeks, before out she steamed, to give her the once-over.

We were waiting to be called, Dot and I, and watching them shoot the preliminary of a scene, when she came on the set all decked-out like a Christmas tree.

"Your rival," I jeered, and nudged Dot's elbow. "Mrs. Matzir—"

"Lord, that old battle-axe," Dot giggled. And then: "Watch, Ebby! Get a load of this!"

And before I realized what she was up to she was walking right over to Mrs. Matzir, and looking up at her from those huge blue eyes of hers, saying, in a scared little-girl voice I never would have known as Dot's, "You're Mrs. Matzir, aren't you? My—my boy friend—he—he knew you and told me, and I just *had* to speak to you!

"Oh, Mrs. Matzir, I think you're so wonderful! I'm nothing but a no-count extra girl, but I can't help but hear the lovely things people say about you—what a help you are to your husband and how he worships the ground you walk on!

"It's so grand, when a girl is scared and lonely like I am, to see a woman like you—particularly in Hollywood, where people say so many dreadful things about everyone . . ."

It made me almost sick, the way Dot stood there and plastered on the blarney, and the way that poor soul fell for it.

Dot was the first girl from the studio that Mrs. Matzir ever invited to her house. She even went so far as to have me, sometimes. Not often.

After the first time or two, I wasn't such good company. It made me sullen and grouchy, seeing Dot pull the wool over the old girl's eyes, and I got to wondering. If she could do that with Matzir's wife, then that probably was what she was doing with me.

I'd seen a look on Matzir's face, when Dot was around and he thought no one was watching him, that made my stomach squirm. Like a hungry dog waiting for a chance at a particularly juicy bone.

I didn't like it. Dot knew I didn't, for I told her so.

"You've got the looks and the brains. And you've got a start. Why don't you play them straight? Cut out this sex stuff. It's burny, burn, I'm warning you. That guy's going to get out of hand one of these days, and start trying to collect, and when he does and his wife finds out—or I do . . ."

Scenes like that always ended with Dot's arms around me, and her lips against mine, sobbing out that all she was trying to do was to get a start, so we could pay back the money we owed and get married, and if I'd only let her alone and not nag her so everything would be all right.

And swearing on all that was holy, that she loved me and was true to me.

Looking back on it now, I can see that it wasn't because I was a sap that I believed her, but because I didn't dare do anything else. I had to believe in her. I'd paid too big a price for her not to. Like buying something and knowing you're stung and being too proud to admit it.

And I wouldn't admit I was stung with Dot, not even to myself, until that day I came on her and Matzir doing a hot love scene over in a corner of the lot, behind an old set that hadn't been torn down.

I hadn't been working that week, and neither had Dot, but the director had told us to hang 'round. We'd generally wait until about four in the afternoon and then go over to the beach for dinner and a swim.

I hadn't seen Dot come in, and I'd left word at the casting desk to tell her to wait for me, when she did, and had gone nosing round the lot, killing time, looking at this and that, when I rounded the corner of that old deserted set—and—there they were!

They didn't see me, and after the first startled instant, I got back behind a board where I was sure they wouldn't see me.

But I was seeing them, and hearing them, too, after I could get my blood pressure down enough to listen.

I suppose, down in my heart, I had known all along that I was being taken for a ride, but having it rammed down my throat, the way I was getting it then, was a shock. It hurt.

Her arms were around Matzir's neck the way they had been around mine, that night I'd promised to rob the gas station for her. He had his wrapped around her, and he was running his fat lips up and down her white throat, talking, the low rumble of his words coming thick and hoarse to where I crouched:

"You got to quit playing with me, baby—you just got to! Haven't I promised you your job? Haven't I said soon as we begin casting the new picture, you'll get it? Haven't I kept you busy when there's a hundred extras on th' list ahead of you?

"And what am I getting out of it? What're you giving me? Promises, sure—promises, but when're you coming through? Look, how about tonight? The wife's over at her brother's, some shindig or other.

"I'll come and get you and bring you back. We'll go out . . ." his voice fell, smothered down against her lips, I strained to hear, but I couldn't get a word. There were some people coming too, and I didn't want them to catch me listening there, any more than I wanted Dot and Matzir to catch me.

I beat it out of the way, but I didn't go back to the casting office where I was to meet Dot for quite a while. I wanted to cool off first.

The way I was feeling just then, I'd have choked her there before them all. And what Cora had told me that day at the old farm kept coming back to me until I was saying the words over and over to myself: ". . . and how long will she love you after you get her to Hollywood? How long will you be able to keep her?"

"Keep her . . ." I laughed at that. I'd never even had her. All I'd had was what Matzir was getting—or was going to get tonight—pay for services done.

Such little no account, common-place services, as holding up a gas station and losing the love of a girl like Cora Gost!

It was thinking of Cora that got me. I realized that then. Realized why it was that I hadn't dared let myself think of her—why I didn't dare let myself think of her now—

Because I loved her.

Chapter Nine

I HATED myself so much that even my mouth tasted bitter. And when the girl at the casting desk told me that Dot had come and gone, and left a note for me, I just glanced through it and dropped it on the street.

I didn't care enough for it to tear it up, but the hate in me was boiling higher and higher, turning into a red anger at myself, at Dot, at the world.

"Dear, Ebby," she had written, "the swimming date is off. I've got an awful headache and I'm going home to bed. Don't come over, for I won't answer the door. I want to sleep it off. I'll be seeing you in the morning."

"She'll be seeing me before morning," I told myself. "We're having this thing out, Miss Dot Schmitt and I."

I hadn't a key to her room. Generally when she was out and expected me, she'd leave it with the desk clerk. But I knew that night it wouldn't be there and I didn't even ask.

Along about ten o'clock, I went over and took the elevator up to her floor.

Her room was dark. No light coming through the transom. I hadn't expected there would be. But, just around the corner from her door, there was a little jut in the hall and a bench with some cushions on it.

I pulled it out where I could get a good line on the elevator shaft, and fixed myself to wait. I meant to catch her with the goods, if it took me until morning. And—it did.

The light was sliding grey through the dimness of the corridor when the elevator clicked to a stop, and the door slid back to let her off.

Matzir was with her.

I had no quarrel with Matzir . . . and wanted none. I stayed where I was while they walked up to her door, and stood there for a minute laughing, whispering. They weren't six feet from me, and I could hear a lot they said. Not every word maybe, but enough to show me what had been going on. There had been—plenty.

I was still standing there, holding my breath for fear they'd get wise to me, when Matzir pulled a roll of bills out of his pocket and stuffed it down the front of Dot's low cut dress.

"There you are, sweetness," he chuckled, "buy yourself some of those gew-gaws that pretty kids are always wanting." He had his arms around her ready to kiss her, when the elevator clanged again, and Dot yanked herself away.

The hall was dim, and the elevator was in the shadow. I was nearer it than they were, and that's why I saw Mrs. Matzir first.

She came stomping out of that cage as though all the fiends in hell were after her. She was wearing some sort of a thin fleecy cape, and the first whack off the bat, she lamped Matzir and came bearing down on him, like a ship under full sail.

I never have known just why I did what I did then. It certainly wasn't to save Dot, nor Matzir either, as far as that's concerned. Although I was sorry for the poor devil, standing there beside Dot, gasping like a fish out of water, too scared to move.

I think really it was because I wanted my whack at Dot, and I was afraid after Mrs. Matzir got through with her, there wouldn't be anything left.

And it was that roll of bills, too. I'd made up my mind already where that was going to go.

But, before anyone knew what was going on, least of all myself, I was out of the shadows that had hidden me, and standing beside Dot, my hand on her arm. It was as though the gloom and dimness of that long hall had been a jack-in-the-box, and Mrs. Matzir's coming had touched the spring.

All I had time to say was, "Look out . . . ! Leave it to me . . ." and she was on us.

If there had been any laugh in me, it surely would have come out then—the look on her face when she saw me there!

Dot did laugh. Leave it to Dot, I thought grimly, it surely didn't take *her* long to take the upper hand when it was offered her. Mrs. Matzir's face went red as fire. She was confused for the first time in my knowledge of her, and stammering.

"I—I—brother was sending me home in his car, and I—I saw Matzir's car down below, and I thought . . . I thought . . . "

". . . That I was playing 'round behind your back, I suppose . . .!" Matzir was coming up for air by this time, and was doing almost as good a job of it with his sarcasm as Dot did with her laugh.

"Well—you can see. If you can find anything wrong with these two young people spending the evening with me . . . . ."

He led the poor woman, crying to the elevator, and as he stood there waiting, his finger on the bell, he looked over his shoulder at me.

I knew right then and there if there ever was a fat part in a picture that I wanted, it was as good as mine. But I wasn't thinking about that—then.

What I was thinking about was getting my hands on Dot. There were things in me that were aching to be said.

And believe me, it didn't take me very long, after the elevator door had clanged on Matzir and his wife, to begin, either.

I was inside that room of Dot's almost as soon as she was and had the door locked behind me.

I don't know what she had thought out there in the hall, when I'd popped up beside her to save the day, but she knew when I switched the lights on and she saw my face, that I wasn't doing any saving now.

She started to scream, but I grabbed her and shook the scream right back into her throat. Shook her until her hair tumbled down, and the shoulder strap broke on her evening dress and the roll of bills that Matzir had stuck there, fell out on the floor.

She was scared but not too scared to grab for that. I got it first. Three nice, crisp one hundred dollar bills.

"You little two-timing, yellow-haired tramp," I told her, my voice flat as a board, "I saw you and Matzir yesterday out on the lot, knew what was going on tonight, and I've been laying for you.

"I was sitting right there on that bench when you two got off the elevator, and I heard every word you said. Every—damn—word. And what's more—I saw him when he planted that money on you.

"Maybe you think I saved you from that old girl just now, because I loved you. Well, I didn't. I saved you so I could tell you what I thought of you, and shake you loose from this." I shook the bills in her face.

"Take the little guy if you want him, and joy go with you, but try and get this roll, and see what happens to you! It's going to help pay a debt you owe along with me—four hundred and fifty bucks to a filling station back in Iowa." And I stuffed the bills down in my pocket and grinned at her.

She was like a cat, biting and clawing and scratching. I didn't hurt her any. I just caught her hands with one of mine, and held them and put my other hand across her mouth to keep her from rousing the house. And when she quit and began to bawl, I let her go.

"I was going to give it to you anyway, honest I was," she sobbed. "I love you . . . you know I do! And I want to pay that money back as much as you do—"

"You don't love me and never have," I told her flatly. "And you'd better want to pay it back—you had as much to do with stealing it as I had. If we ever got caught, you'd go up for it just the same."

She was so mad at that, she forgot she was crying.

"Yeah?" she said, "try and prove it. You haven't a thing that would tie me to it—not one thing! You . . ."

"How about that letter you wrote me when you gypped me out of your fare west?" I asked her. "Maybe you've forgotten that! I haven't."

"What letter?" she began. "What . . . ." and then she didn't say anything else. Just stood for a second with that little mouth of hers half open, and so still that not even an eye-lash quivered. Like a clock that has been ticking away like mad, and all of a sudden—stops.

And that stillness was on her when I turned and walked out of the door. Even getting on the elevator, I could feel it boring into my back.

It was a stillness so crowded with hate and malice and fear, that it set my spine to pricking, and stirred the hair on my neck.

And she never broke it—not even to ask for the money I'd taken from her. I went away with it stuffed in my trouser pocket.

That morning, before I left for the studio, I made a package of it, and the money I'd saved—small bills, mine. Fives, tens, twenties. Four hundred and fifty dollars in all. They made quite a pile by the time I had them all stacked together. Then I sent it to Cora. I stuck a note inside, telling her how to handle it. To take it to some nearby town and remail it, straight to the gas station, postage collect.

God knows I didn't want to mix the poor kid up in it any more than I had to, but she was the only person who knew the truth and whom I could trust.

I didn't mean to say anything about myself when I started writing, but I couldn't seem to help it. Before I was through, I was telling her everything that had happened—about Dot and all.

Down at the end I said, "I've lost you—I know that. And I've got it coming to me, but as long as I'm coming clean on everything else, I'd like to come clean on this. I love you. I'll always love you till the day I die . . ."

After I'd dropped that money and the letter it held in the mail box, I felt like a kid who's had his mouth washed out with soap.

Just ten days afterward, I got a letter from her. It came to the studio. Such a funny little letter, in a neat, round handwriting that was so like Cora, I could almost see her. It never mentioned getting the money. All it said was how glad she was to hear from me, and that she and her father were well, and missed me. That they were busy with the spring plowing; that one of their cows'd had twin calves, and that they'd caught the weasel that'd been after the chickens.

She wrote, too, of the early spring and how the trees were budding, and how pretty the fields looked with the new wheat green against the sun.

But—pinned to her letter was a clipping from the town paper, reporting the mysterious return of the stolen money. ". . . One of those strange quirks of conscience that overtake even criminals at times . . ."

It was just an accident that I saw the other thing she wrote. On the back of the clipping, and crowded in between the printed rows: "Lost things are sometimes found, Ebby. Did you—ever try?"

I wouldn't let myself think what that meant. I didn't dare, but all day long, I kept seeing those fields she had written about, warm against the spring sun, the cows coming up the lane at milking time, and the neat farm kitchen with its clean curtains. Cora, with her brown hair brushed smooth and her pretty face flushed and sweet, laying the table for supper.

I was so homesick I wanted to die.

Chapter Ten

WE HAD been working for about five days on the same set, Dot and I, but we hadn't seen each other alone since that morning in her room, and we weren't speaking, except when we had to.

It was a northwoods story that called for a lot of risky water stuff and we were doubling—I, for a leading man who had water phobia and couldn't swim; Dot for a star, who wouldn't.

But Matzir was following her around like a sick dog, and it was open gossip that she was slated for a real part in the next picture that he was casting, and everyone was wondering how long it would be before Mrs. Matzir got wise.

I didn't wonder. I didn't even care.

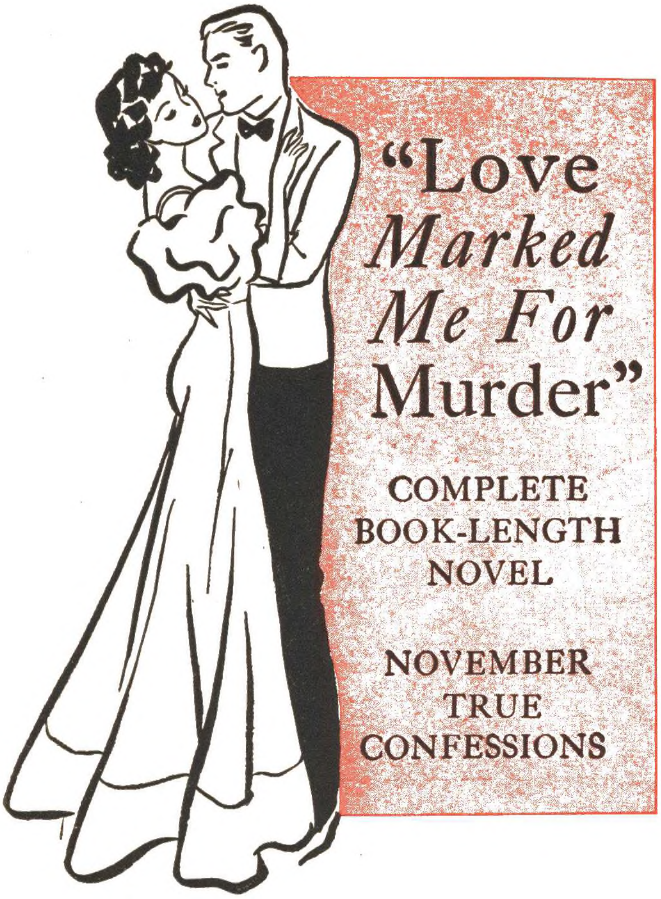
Paying that money back to Hardin had seemed to wash the last of Dot out of my system. But it hadn't washed the last of me out of hers! She hated me.

Every now and then, when we were working together, I'd look up and find her eyes on me with that same bleak stillness in them I had seen there the morning I had reminded her of that letter she had written me, and left her room with her three hundred dollars in my pocket.

And it could always send my spine to pricking and bring the goose flesh out on my skin.

Oh, she hated me all right. But if anyone had told me that she hated me bad enough to try and murder me, I'd have laughed.

We'd been on the picture nearly three weeks, when that happened. Not working steadily—held up by bad weather, one thing and another, and waiting for the right time to shoot the big scene where Dot and I had our real work to do.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It was a part of the sequence that called for a tipped over canoe in a whirlpool, and a rescue, swimming against the current. And because the director was a fiend for realism, there wasn't to be any fake about the whirlpool. He'd been holding off until the spring freshets had brought the mountain streams up to where they were really something, even to a guy like me who had worked with the rescue squad in the big 1936 flood.

He had chosen one of the swiftest, too, and they weren't planning any retakes on that job—for Dot and me, nor any rehearsals. It was the first time—or curtains.

Dot knew that as well as I did. But, she didn't seem scared. Just took her orders along with me, not even looking my way. She could swim as well as I could. She'd learned in the Mississippi, and that's no weak little stream.

But she never said a word to me, not one—nor I to her. And once out in that mad, whirling torrent, with our tiny boat bobbing around like a cork, we didn't have any chance to talk, even if we'd wanted to.

It was all we could do to keep from upsetting till it was time for us to upset, and listen to the director yelling his megaphoned instructions from a boat by the shore.

Just before the order came to shoot, I really got a good look at Dot's face, white as a ghost's, with burning eyes and lips like a bleeding scar. I was sitting with my weight thrown against the canoe, ready to tip it as soon as word came, when I felt that still look of hers on me again, and swung to meet it. I knew at last what the look meant.

Death.

It was that knowledge that I carried down into the water with me. That and the memory of those red lips of hers against her stark white face.

I really don't remember much about what happened after that. The thing had come with such a shock to me that she had me, down there under the water, before I could defend myself, her arms around me, strangling at me, pushing at me, holding me down, while the current tugged at us and my lungs were strained to bursting, and my heart was an agony worse than any death.

It would have been death too, for both of us, perhaps, if it hadn't been for an accident.

A small uprooted tree, sweeping down-stream with its long roots dragging in the water, had caught Dot in its passing, a glancing blow, but enough to knock her senseless, and free me from her smothering hands.

She'd have gone down like a log, if swimming hadn't been as automatic with me as walking, and if I hadn't had the lungs of an ox.

I still don't remember how I got her out of the current, and back to the boat that was paddling like mad out to meet us, but—I did.

And once on shore, I didn't hear the camera man, when he slapped me on the back to tell me what a swell picture he'd got. All I was thinking of was some dry clothes and a good stiff drink. As soon as I had those and saw that Dot was coming to, I beat it.

I was getting out of that place as quick as I could. And out of Hollywood.

I was heading back to Iowa, and—if she would have me—to Cora. "Lost things—are sometimes found . . ." she'd written.

Well—I was going to see.

It was about seven o'clock, on a morning nearly two weeks afterward, when I walked up the driveway to old man Gost's back door. One of those warm blue mornings, with the snow balls along the fence like big white bouquets, and the lilac tree by the pump, heavy with its purple blooms.

I had stopped at a farmhouse down the road a piece to wash my face and hands, but I was ragged and streaked with coal dirt, and my shoes were white with dust.

I had meant to go down to the barn and clean myself off a bit, before I showed up at the house, but—I couldn't move. All I could do was to stand there, staring around me, breathing it in—the stillness, the sweetness—as though I'd never breathe again.

That was the way Cora found me.

Coming out on the porch, with the sun shining on her hair, on her crisp starched dress and her bright young face, she saw me there. Crying my name, she ran to me, the pan she had held clattering on the stones, her little shoes hitting, click, clickety, click, tapping out the sweetest music I'll ever hear.

She was in my arms when her father came running up from the barn. We were crying, both of us, and clinging to each other, and Tige was barking and jumping around us like mad.

It wasn't such an easy matter, making a clean breast of things to old man Gost, while he chewed at his mustache and listened, his eyes almost lost beneath their over-hanging brows.

And it wasn't any easier, going with him over to Hardin's, and telling my story there. But I did that. And Cora went with me, and stood by me all the time, hanging on to my hand like a kid, her cheeks pink, her little chin up in the air, as though she were proud.

Proud—think of it! Of a thing like me!

"I'm not asking any favors, Mr. Hardin," I said, when I'd finished. "And I'm not trying to put the blame on Dot. I stole the money. It's still a crime though it's paid back, and if you want to run me in . . . ."

"Run you in?" he drawled, "Hell, kid . . . why should I? I've got my money, haven't I? Always did think it was a good thing to let dead dogs lie. This one's dead. It'll stay dead far's I'm concerned.

"When 're you going to be married, you and Cora?"

"As soon as she'll have me," I said, and then I wasn't saying any more because Cora's arms were 'round me and she was crying her heart out against my shoulder.

We've been married almost three months now. And in all that time, I've never heard from Dot but once. That was through Hardin. A truck driver, coming in from Los Angeles, said he had seen her selling hamburgers at a restaurant just out of Hollywood, and talked with her. She'd told him she was out of pictures because some crazy dame had got jealous of her and had her fired.

That was Matzir's wife, of course. It had to come. But, knowing Dot, I doubt if she will be out for long. There are other studios, and other jobs. And maybe by the time she lands her next job, she'll have sense enough to play the game straight.

I hope so. I'm too happy to hold any grudges. Between seeing that the crops are in before the ground dries out, and working evenings on the old farm that Gost is giving Cora and me for our wedding present, I'm busy from early morning until dark. While Cora sings all day at her work, and the dimples are never out of her cheeks.

They never will be, if I can help it.

That's a promise, God.

Ours Was a Cocktail Marriage

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 105]

"I can get my own guys," she snapped. "I've never had much trouble before. And for a wise guy, you're a sap! Lynn didn't drop that bag of hers—she kicked it under your car on purpose! She's been playing you from the start. We're here on faked leave, and the tickets Lynn bribed out of Dot Barker, the girl you were supposed to meet. We haven't any date, and only two dollars and fifty cents between us, and Lynn set out to make you the minute she spotted you there by the curb!"

She was so mad she almost choked, and madder still, when all Duke did was to throw his head back and roar. He was still laughing when a cop came up and touched his shoulder:

"Hey, son!" his eyes flew to Pet and me and our luggage. "This your car and these your dames? What's the idea holding up traffic this way? Load 'em in and get going."

"Oky-doke!" Duke's laughter had done him good—his sullenness was gone; his eyes gay once more. "Keep your shirt on, fella, coming right along," and planking my bag in the rumble with Pet's on top of it, he lifted me almost bodily into the car, and motioning Pet to follow, swung his own long legs over the other side and into place beneath the wheel.

"Never resist an officer," he said gravely. "I learned that in college. It's my only straight A course and I'd hate to spoil my record now."

"Far be it from us to interfere with any man's education," I made my voice as serious as his, and even Pet joined in the delighted howl that followed. By the time we had reached the stadium, he knew all about our crazy week-end. I was thinking, little trickles stirring my spine, how handsome he was, and wondering if his famous brother could be half as nice.

Pet was accustomed to older boys, but my dates had been mostly Prep school kids, nearer my own seventeen years. It was the biggest thrill I'd ever had, having a boy like this fall for me—and fall so hard.

OUR seats were down on the front line with the college crowd and by the time Duke had seated us, there were half a dozen of his fraternity brothers swarming around, eager to be introduced. Pet had forgotten her mad and was letting herself go with a vengeance. I was as silly as she until the game started. But after that . . .

I could see Duke was jealous the way I kept my eyes on the field, but I didn't care. The minute the team ran out to take their places, I'd picked out Dig. I couldn't have mistaken him—he looked just like his pictures. And, even with his football helmet on, I could see how much alike he and Duke were.

It was only when he came over to speak to Duke for a minute that I saw the difference between them. A difference that was to mean so much to me—so terribly much—in the months to come. There was a sternness to his mouth that Duke's laughing, easy-going lips lacked, and a steady soberness behind his grey, straight-gazing eyes.

He had been hurt a short time before—a strained leg ligament, and limped a little as he walked. They had taken him out just before the end of the second quarter, and on his way to the bench he had spotted Duke and come over.

"Barker wanted to know about his sister," he began, then he stopped and his eyes went hard as nails.

Drinking in the grandstand was against the college rules, but Duke and the crowd with him must have had three or four bottles between them. I'd been watching the game too closely to do much drinking, but the rest were getting pretty high, including Pet. She was sitting beside one of the boys with an arm around his neck, but as soon as she heard Dig mention Dot's name, she gave that silly giggle of hers and pointed at me. "Ask Lynn. She did away with her and stole her tickets. Dragged me on here, too, just to see you play. You're her secret pash, you know. Aren't you flattered? How about a drink to celebrate?"

"Pet! Shame!" I cried, while one of the boys snatched the bottle away from her. As Dig's disgusted eyes flew from her to me, my face burned.

My hat was off, my hair wind blown, my eyes shining. I probably looked like a ten-year-old. I know I felt like one beneath the quick judging of that steady gaze, as Dig listened to his brother's sullen explanation.

"A swell spot you've got yourself into," he snapped at me, when Duke had finished. "Away on a faked leave and without money enough to cover a hotel bill! You're nothing but a kid—you're out of your depth in a crowd like this! Look at 'em now! What will they be before the night's over!

"Duke, for Pete's sake, even if you are drunk, haven't you any sense? When did you begin robbing cradles. The blonde looks as though she could take care of herself—but this kid! Get her out of here! Send her back to the kindergarten where she belongs!"

I'd never been so mad in all my days. I was fairly boiling! Before Duke could answer, I'd broken in, my voice shaking, my cheeks on fire:

"I'm no baby, I'll thank you to know! I've been around. And if I paid Dot Barker my best sweater just for the sake of seeing you play, it's no one's business but my own. Personally," fishing in my bag for a cigarette, I lit it and blew the smoke in Dig's face, "I think I've made a darn' poor bargain—if it wasn't for Duke. He's—swell!"

"I guess that's telling 'em, Shrimp!" Duke admired, putting his arm around me. He added, his eyes meeting Dig's in open defiance: "She's going to the dance tonight with me, too. Got anything to say to that?"

Dig said, never taking his gaze from mine: "Is that so, kid?"

"It certainly is!" I answered, and stared back at him. It seemed an eternity to me, before he said quietly, "Okay. But don't say I didn't warn you!" and swung on his spiked heels.

I TURNED myself loose after that. Send me back to the kindergarten where I belonged! I'd show him! I wasn't very much on drinking, but—I did my best. And it was pretty good. Rawlings won and everyone was crazy anyway. We must have taken in half a dozen taverns before the crowd of us, piled into Duke's car, hanging on the running boards, spewing out of the rumble, landed at the fraternity house at last.

They had made it up between them—Duke and the boys, that Pet and I could change into our evening things right there in the room they had set aside for the evening for the girls' powder room. They were waiting outside the door for us when we had finished. I wasn't so bad, but, even then, Pet couldn't get her dress on alone. Seeing her that way put the responsibility for what we were to do after the dance on me.

I tried to talk it over with her, but she just snapped at me, her eyes sullen: "How about that prize fish—your Mr. Duke Anderson? You seem to have him hooked all right. Ask him."

"All right—I will," I snapped back. And I did. We were dancing, and Duke's hands were hot against my bare back, his face close to mine.

"Working me for a room at the hotel, now, are you, you little Gold-Digger?" he laughed. "Oh well, we won't worry over that for a while!" and squeezing me tight, he kissed my mouth.

I had my hand back to slap him when I saw Dig. He wasn't four feet away and dancing with some girl, but he was staring straight at me, and I knew by the way his lips were twisting, that he had seen Duke kiss me.

"Your brother . . ." I whispered against Duke's cheek. "He's watching . . . swing me closer where he can get this . . ." And when we were so near that my skirts were whipping Dig's heels, I pulled his face down to mine and kissed him back. And over his shoulder, I called to Dig:

"How'm I doing for a kindergartener? Think I'll make first grade soon?"

Duke laughed, but Dig muttered: "You crazy fool, kid!" His face was paper white.

By half past eleven the lid was off. I'd heard of wild parties—been on a few, but never on anything that touched that one. You couldn't take three steps in any direction without coming on a couple petting. There weren't half a dozen boys sober, and not very many girls.

Dig was one of the few sober boys, but I certainly wasn't one of the sober girls! And everywhere I went, it seemed to me, I was bumping into him; his eyes seemed never to be off me. He hadn't come with a girl; just hung around with the stag line, cutting in now and then—but never with me. I'd expected him to at first and thought up smart things to say to him—wise cracks about my kindergarten, but when he didn't, I kept getting madder and madder, and wilder and wilder.

I STILL don't know how I got upstairs in that third floor room. Nor how Pet got there, either. But that's where Dig found us—and it must have been long after the twelve o'clock campus rules had emptied the house of girls.

We were shooting craps, Duke and the boy who had been with Pet, and I, on our knees on the floor. Pet was sprawled on a cot, so far out she couldn't move.

We were all of us drunk enough to think it a good joke. "We'll just let her stay here," Duke chuckled. "And you can stay here, too. Couldn't get her in a hotel the way she is, anyway. She'll have slept it off by morning, and we can smuggle you out without anyone seeing. Swell idea—couldn't be better!"

And wild as we were—crazy as we were, that was all there had been to it. But it was plain by the look on Dig's face when he pushed open that door, and fairly tumbled into the room, that he didn't believe it was such a swell idea.

"Are you crazy, Duke?" he lashed. "If you weren't my brother I'd have you broken for this. Do you know what's happened? Someone's squealed to the Dean that you've got these girls here, and they're sending a man over to investigate! I got tipped off not five minutes ago, and I've searched every room in this house hunting you. We've got to get 'em out of here and get 'em out quick!"

Grabbing Pet in his arms, he snapped at me, the words sliding crookedly from his twisted lips: "If you've got enough sense in that red head of yours to get your things out of the dressing room, and beat it for the side door, get going. Duke will show you the way. I've the car parked in the alley. We're taking you to some hotel—and leaving you . . ."

I'd seen that our bags were packed and closed, when we had changed early in the evening. I was glad of that now, for I couldn't have found anything in that dim, unfamiliar, cluttered room, and besides, I was shaking like a leaf. I found the bags where we had left them, and fairly threw them at Duke, as I stumbled after him out to the car.

Dig had to try three or four places before he could find one that would take us in; two girls, and one of them openly drunk. It was only because he knew the night clerk, that he finally got us in a hotel. By that time Pet had come to enough to be good and sick, and anxious to get to the elevator. I think everything would have been all right, if Duke hadn't lost his head, and insisted on kissing me good-bye.

It was the way Dig looked when he yanked him away, and the way he grabbed me and fairly shoved me toward the elevator, that sent me haywire.

"You can take your hands off me, Mr. Dig Anderson," I yelled like a fishwife. "You've bossed this party just long enough. Go ahead and put the invalid to bed. Duke and I—we're going places and doing things, aren't we, Duke?"

FOR an instant, across Duke's shoulder, I met Dig's eyes, and saw there something that wasn't anger or disgust—something that sent my heart to thumping and brought the blood in a crimson flood up and over my cheeks. Deep, beneath my own rage, I found myself thinking in a crazy exulting: "He doesn't hate me! He—he likes me! It's there in his face and he can't hide it! He's fallen for me—that's what's the matter with him—he's fallen for me harder than Duke!" And then, the look wasn't there any more. Nothing but a cold, bleak disgust, and Duke had my arm and was saying thickly: "Let'sh get going," and we were out of the hotel and on our way.

We turned north on the highway out of town. It was lined with taverns and roadhouses and clubs. We stopped whenever a place looked good, or Duke thought he was thirsty.

It was Duke's idea, our getting married. We'd just been driving along and happened on a little town with a marrying justice's sign blazing in red neon lights across the road, and Duke had offered it as a good idea.

"Let'sh have another drink." It meant about that much to him. And not much more to me.

Even the frowsy-headed, bleary-eyed justice whose racket it was, was almost as drunk as we were. But not so drunk he couldn't marry us. And not so drunk he couldn't see something familiar about Duke.

"Anderson?" he said and squinted at him. Say, you're Anderson the football player, ain't you! Boy, what a souse!" And to me, "Well, he's all yours, baby, take him away! I'll bet the coach at Rawlings will be cussing you plenty when this breaks!"

I hardly heard what he was saying. I couldn't get out of the place soon enough.

It was almost morning. There was a thin greyness in the eastern sky; and the damp, thick mists that swirled like ghosts about us, sent their chill through the thin silk of my evening jacket to bring sense and a half-sanity back to me.

On Duke, it acted the other way. The air had made him drowsy and stupid. I shoved him aside and took the wheel, with the consciousness of what I had done just beginning to dawn on me. Married! This drunken boy slouched in the seat beside me, snoring; his mouth open, his chin in his shirt front, was—my husband! A boy I hardly knew . . . A boy I didn't love!

Why I didn't want to be married! I was too young to be married! I wouldn't be married . . .I—wouldn't!

And there was Pet, too. What about Pet? I'd forgotten all about her!

I had started the car mechanically as it had been headed, toward Chicago. I swung it now, cutting blindly into the fog, back toward Rawlings, my mind frantic with its mixed-up, crazy planning. How I could keep that marriage of mine secret—keep anyone from finding out ever. Perhaps—even Duke! Hadn't I heard of people who did things when they were drunk and forgot them afterwards?

Between the cold and nerves my teeth were chattering and my hands were so stiff I could hardly hold the wheel. Passing through a lane of trees that made the dark shadows on either side of me, darker still, I swung the car to a stop, and with the help of a flashlight I found in the pocket of the car, I got my bag from the rumble, and there in the grass at the side of the road, I changed into my sports suit.

It was a straight road back to Rawlings. I had no trouble finding the way, and I must have driven like a mad thing, for it was still barely light, when at last I braked to a grating stop in front of the Fraternity House.

There was a blanket in the rumble. I saw it when I hauled out Pet's bag and mine. I covered Duke with it. I felt sorry for him but I was sick with shame. I never wanted to see him again.

THE campus lay about eight blocks from town, but it didn't take me long to get there.

I was out of the elevator and hurrying down the corridor, counting the numbers as I ran, when I saw Dig. He had been sprawled on one of the couches that dotted the long hallway, and was on his feet and had me by the arm before I could dodge him.

"Lynn," he whispered. He didn't seem to be able to make the words come at first—as though his breath was choking him. ". . . hours I've been waiting here—ages! Afraid you were dead . . . in a ditch somewhere . . . afraid of everything!"

His hands dug into my shoulders, shook at them. "My brother? Where's Duke? What's happened? Where've you been? Are you—all right? Tell me—I've got to know!"

I tried to free myself and couldn't. I tried to meet his eyes, but I couldn't do that. "Let me go!" I begged. "Please, Dig, let me go! I'm all right—honest, I am. And Duke's all right too. He's—I left him in front of the frat house, asleep. He's in his car. He doesn't know where I am, and I want to get away before he finds out!

"If—if only . . ." I began to cry, the tears streaking my face, ". . . if only you'd let me go. Pet's there and I'll waken her and catch the first train back to school! Please! Please! Please!"

His hands were more gentle now, the tension loosened. But they still held me. "Look at me, Lynn," he said. "Look in my eyes. When I did, my own gaze sick with shame, he whispered low, as though to keep even himself from hearing:

"To think the first girl I ever wanted . . . the first girl I ever fell for—and she's got to be—like you!"

He was on his way down the corridor, when he swung and came back again. I hadn't stirred. His face was grey and tired. His voice was tired.

"There is something I must say to you. I thought I could leave without it, but I can't. I don't know how much Duke has had of you tonight—or how little. But I know Duke. He's my brother, but I'm warning you—for your soul's sake to let whatever there's been between you end here. Go back to that school of yours, and stay there. And cut out week-ends such as this one. You'll be safer."

And leaning down with something that was almost like a sob, he kissed me.

I went in to Pet with Dig's kiss warm on my lips and my fingers covering it to hold it there.

Pet slept most of the way home. As soon as we got back to school she went to bed and stayed there. I tried to but I couldn't. I tried to study for a geography exam—a lot I cared whether they got rubber from Brazil—or spinach! And a lot of difference it made to me.

I gave up at last and cried, my head on my arm; cried till I thought I'd die.

Pet wakened enough to mutter sleepily: "For heaven's sake quit your blubbering! I don't know what you've done, but if it's what I think, crying isn't going to help you any. If you don't know how to take care of yourself, stay off week-end dates like that one. I thought you were wise!" And went to sleep again.

I wondered what she would say if she knew what I *had* done. I didn't have to wonder long.

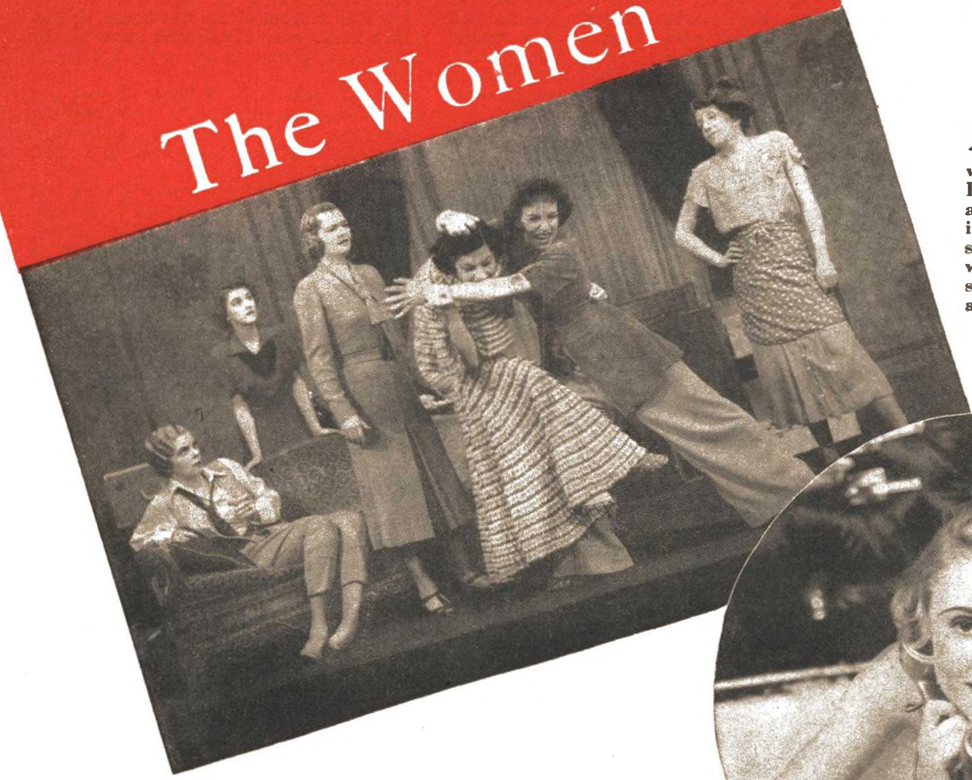
Monday, Tuesday, I went to classes; stood Dot's curious questioning; said "Yes, Ma'am," to Miss Tripp's "I hope you and Pet enjoyed yourselves, Lynn . . ." and kept my eyes on my books. I doubt if even Miss Tripp could have avoided seeing the misery that was in them. Every time the telephone rang, I nearly jumped out of my shoes, I was so afraid it would be Duke; that he had remembered what had happened, and was calling me.

But when the blow fell at last, it came in another way—a way I'd *never* thought of. A—terrible way . . .

What will be the outcome of Lynn's crazy, impulsive marriage? And what of Dig who loves her? Will he take "on the chin" the bitter truth that the only girl he ever wanted married his brother in a liquor-soaked ceremony?

Don't miss the startling conclusion of this powerful true story in November TRUE CONESSIONS. Order your copy now!

The Women



A sensational scene from *The Women* which vividly dramatizes Park Avenue morons in a rage. The scrubwoman is too disgusted to be shocked! Another woman phones from her satin-lined bathroom as she soaks in luxury.

THERE is a play running on Broadway at the present time—written by a woman, acted by women, called *The Women*, and the play is a disgrace to the class of women it portrays—although the play is a financial success. It is unfortunate that anyone should believe that all women are like that. If it were true, I, as a woman, should want to commit suicide!

The women in this play are wealthy women and those who make their living catering to these snobs. Because these women have money and social standing (by virtue of their husbands' position), they consider themselves "out of the top drawer," so to speak. They are the smartly-dressed, exquisitely-groomed, bored-looking creatures who are the envy of so many working girls and young married women. Yet their minds are so hopelessly underdeveloped; their characters so warped and ugly; their conduct so outrageous, that instead of envying them their jewels and clothes, one should pity them profoundly as one would pity the crippled and deformed in body.

Among women of this class of pampered drones, nothing is sacred; neither love nor virtue; fidelity nor friendship; wifehood nor motherhood. Bored with their shallow, useless existence these women will break up a home, ruin a life, kill a man's ideals—just for excitement.

But all women are not like this—it isn't even true that all wealthy women are like this. It is only when riches are put into the hands of morons whose only claim to distinction is their carefully guarded looks, that women go haywire and become the inhuman little vultures that these Park Avenue parasites are.

Certainly no self-respecting man of virility and idealism would want to be saddled for life with a wife as poisonous as the creatures in *The Women*. But even the men of their class don't take them for life. They marry with one eye cocked on the divorce courts. Their matings and partings may make the society columns but not one of these women could hold an honest job; help a man build a future; cook a satisfying meal; or mother a brood of fine children.

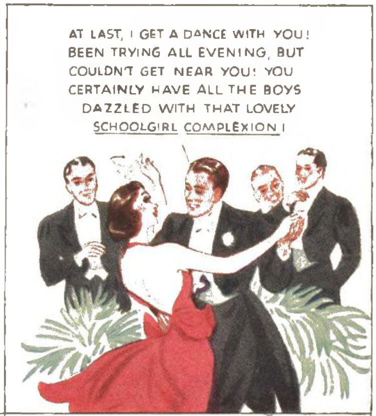
In fact, not one of them could win a clear-eyed, clear-thinking man and so, fortunately, their menace is limited to the inbred little vicious circle in which they senselessly whirl. Next time you pass a haughty, overbearing, groomed-to-the-teeth woman, don't envy her! She even merits more pity than contempt.

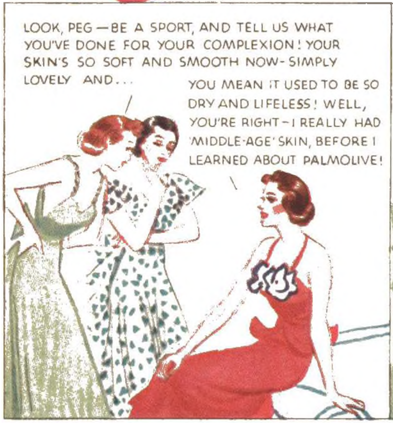
The Editor

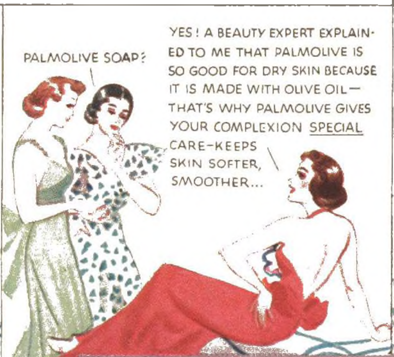
NO MORE WORRY

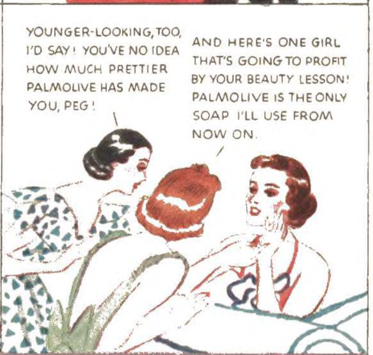
ABOUT DRY, LIFELESS "MIDDLE-AGE" SKIN!

Every girl should read Peg's story!


AT LAST, I GET A DANCE WITH YOU! BEEN TRYING ALL EVENING, BUT COULDN'T GET NEAR YOU! YOU CERTAINLY HAVE ALL THE BOYS DAZZLED WITH THAT LOVELY SCHOOLGIRL COMPLEXION!

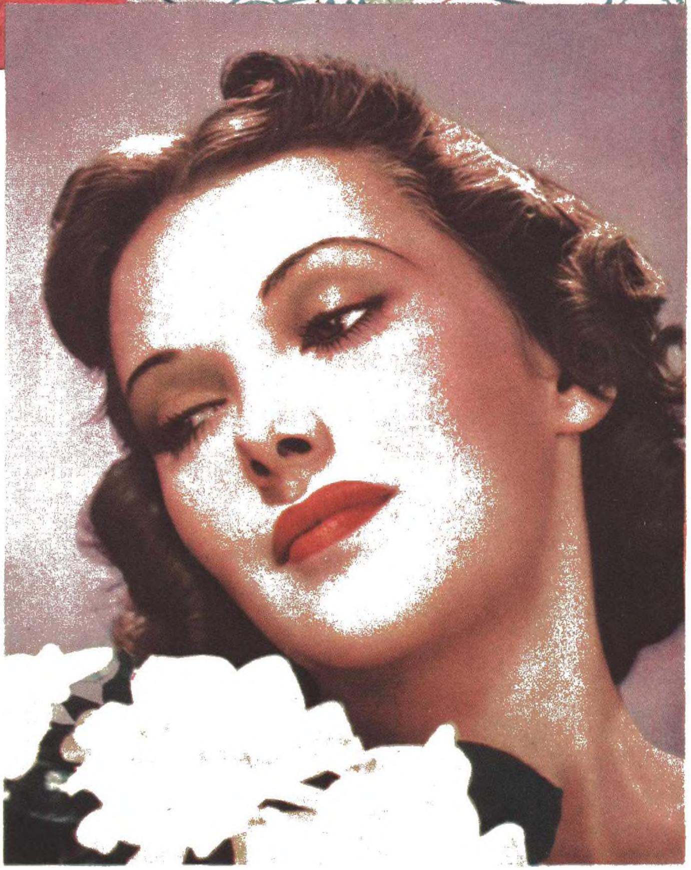

LOOK, PEG—BE A SPORT, AND TELL US WHAT YOU'VE DONE FOR YOUR COMPLEXION! YOUR SKIN'S SO SOFT AND SMOOTH NOW-SIMPLY LOVELY AND...
YOU MEAN IT USED TO BE SO DRY AND LIFELESS! WELL, YOU'RE RIGHT—I REALLY HAD 'MIDDLE-AGE' SKIN, BEFORE I LEARNED ABOUT PALMOLIVE!


PALMOLIVE SOAP?
YES! A BEAUTY EXPERT EXPLAINED TO ME THAT PALMOLIVE IS SO GOOD FOR DRY SKIN BECAUSE IT IS MADE WITH OLIVE OIL—THAT'S WHY PALMOLIVE GIVES YOUR COMPLEXION SPECIAL CARE—KEEPS SKIN SOFTER, SMOOTHER...


YOUNGER-LOOKING, TOO, I'D SAY! YOU'VE NO IDEA HOW MUCH PRETTIER PALMOLIVE HAS MADE YOU, PEG!
AND HERE'S ONE GIRL THAT'S GOING TO PROFIT BY YOUR BEAUTY LESSON! PALMOLIVE IS THE ONLY SOAP I'LL USE FROM NOW ON.

WHY PALMOLIVE, MADE WITH OLIVE OIL, GIVES COMPLEXIONS A SPECIAL CARE . . . KEEPS SKIN SOFT, SMOOTH, YOUNG!

Palmolive is made from a special blend of Olive and Palm Oils—nature's finest beauty oils. Naturally, a soap made with these beauty oils has a different and very *special* lather. Palmolive's lather is so soothing, so kind to your skin. It cleanses gently, yet with a thoroughness that removes every bit of dirt and cosmetics. Keeps your skin soft, smooth and fresh . . . alive with beauty!



KEEP THAT "SCHOOLGIRL COMPLEXION" . . . GUARD AGAINST "MIDDLE-AGE" SKIN

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